A Study of Photography and Walking through the City in Modern,

Postmodern, and Contemporary Canadian Art

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ABSTRACT

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The connection between photography and walking is fundamental in the history of Canadian photography and art. This association has not garnered any significant study until now, although its presence can be seen increasing in various forms of photographic works since the middle of the twentieth century. Theoretical approaches dealing with place and space support analysis of realist photographs and conceptual projects where this combination is represented, intentionally or factually. Boulevard Saint-Laurent, in Montreal, provides a historic place and cultural space, as well as the site and surface for the creation of an original artwork, *Every Foot of the Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent (2010-2012*. Interviews with significant Canadian photographers and artists related to questions of urban space, walking, photography and art history are conducted to understand better the importance and meaning of this combined activity, and these interviews are analyzed in the text. This thesis explains the bond between photography and walking over the last half century, confirming its force as a continued source of inspiration for contemporary photographers and artists, in Canada and elsewhere.

Acknowledgements

Many people have supported and encouraged this project. I am grateful to the members of my supervisory committee. Dr Martha Langford, my principal supervisor, encouraged me to combine my interests in photographic history and photographic creation in conceptualizing this research/creation project. Her brilliant mind, caring supervision, and elegant guidance are the cornerstones of this thesis. The support and critical guidance of Raymond April and Dr Cynthia Hammond were central in making this project truly interdisciplinary, both intellectually rich and creatively challenging. I also wish to thank Louise Désy, curator, Canadian Centre for Architecture, for kindly agreeing to serve as external examiner.

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For Julie Cusson

Preface

The location represented in *Every Foot of the Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent* is public urban space in a major city. People walk there every day. My principal motivation for this work was to combine photography and walking in the city and to translate these two ways of accumulating sensorial experience into image, or in this case, a vast assemblage of images. Although my intention from the beginning was to photograph this historic and symbolic artery, boulevard Saint-Laurent, in its entirety, the project was never conceived in terms of documentary photography. I was interested in creating an aesthetic experience grounded in spatial theory.

An important component of theories regarding space and place involve areas of human interaction in the public sphere; the sidewalks of Saint-Laurent are quintessentially such a space. I wondered what photos of my street could reveal if its sidewalks were photographed empty, devoid of human traffic. Showing this space only when there was no one in the picture frame struck me as a means of introducing a hermeneutic layer, led by the spectatorial imaginition, to the project. Another significant objective was to show this street photographically as it had never been seen. Even documentary photographs commissioned as evidence for demolition ironically included the soon-to-be displaced residents. My decision to keep the human figure out also refers to current conditions of street photography in Quebec where there is a legal restraint on photographing people without their permission.

That people are unpictured in these 2524 images does not mean a lack of social interaction in the making of *Every Foot of the Sidewalk*. The project is upheld by

unplanned interaction with strangers. During the two years I photographed this work

people often stopped me to ask what I was photographing. Some came out of their homes

wondering why I was taking a picture of their house from across the street. Most were

genuinely interested to hear about my artwork, and many were perplexed when I

explained that it was not their house but the empty sidewalk that passed in front of their

home that was the real space I was snapping with my camera. Making this work often

involved waiting for someone to pass by or asking lingerers to step out of the picture

frame.

In this sense, this project resulted in a form of spontaneous social activity where

strangers interacted and thought about art because of this project. As I began to see the

results of this visual experiment, I was struck by something of a categorical shift. The

absence of people in the picture frame denotes a distinctive component in the history of

Canadian art that goes back to landscape painting. The series bridges representations of

the city and the wilderness. Indeed, without any visible human presence along the street,

boulevard Saint-Laurent appears in its own state of wilderness. Now that the work is

complete, this exploration of photography and walking has also become a paradox

relating to emptiness in photographic representation. While it was never imagined as a

signifier for the pathos of absence, *Every Foot of the Sidewalk* does reveal the power of

spaces in which we stage our daily lives.

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Introduction

When a photographer steps out the door with a camera to go off and photograph, [he or she] has a particular goal or destination [in mind]. You can imagine the destination, but you never really reach it.

Tom Gibson, *False Evidence Appearing Real* [1]

This statement by Canadian street photographer Tom Gibson is a dynamic expression of the essential rapport between photography and walking, which in turn relates these to space. Gibson uses the street as a productive space for creating his photographs. Chance – serving either as a guide or an accomplice – is a welcome companion on his intuitive walks. His remark is a reminder that the ambulating photographer is always stepping into a new space that is framed not only by geographical boundaries, but also by subjective settings.

A deep and enduring relationship exists between photography and walking in Canada, yet this rapport has never been the subject of thorough analysis. Since the 1950s, with the appearance of new ways of looking at and thinking about photography, this association has become more profound and complex. Fresh creative motivations and interpretations have emerged, which have marked photographic culture. In the following pages, I will demonstrate how photography and walking have been combined during the last sixty years to produce influential, original, and critical works and to provide diverse and penetrating perspectives into different urban Canadian spaces. One of these spaces is boulevard Saint-Laurent in Montreal, also known as la Main. This is also a space that I have repeatedly walked and photographed for this thesis.

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[1] Tom Gibson, "A Conversation with Tom Gibson, Annotated by Martha Langford," in *False Evidence Appearing Real* (Ottawa: CMCP, 1993), 97.

While Gibson's approach to photography and my own differ in many respects, we both walk. This project is part of a long-term multidisciplinary study of photography and walking in Canadian art that consists of two major components. In 2009, as part of my application to the Special Individualized Program (SIP) at Concordia University, I discussed the question of interdisciplinarity as follows:

> Photography has always been an important means of expression and exploration for me. Its inherent role as a marker of the passage of time creates visual fragments that I see as apertures looking out onto cultural and historical referents that underlie the photograph's paradigmatic denotative value. […] Photography, walking, and the urban landscape are fundamentally connected to spatio-temporal agents that I am eager to investigate in depth; these are also exciting components around which to create an artwork. […] My most successful creative projects have often contained a distinct documentary undertone, which evokes the ambulating photographer's gaze in the city. I consider the challenge of thoroughly investigating the points of junction between these disciplines as an ideal opportunity in my pursuits as an artist and student of culture.

The academic work I have since completed, pertaining to the history of Canadian photography, urban and spatial theory, and photography, has consistently reinforced the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to my research. Whether the photographers who walked to make their images were looking for social documentary or historical signifiers, poetic tropes, or the National Film Board Still Photography Division propaganda photographs that, as Carol Payne notes, "have long been recognized as effective tools of persuasion"[2]; many of these photos would not exist were it not for their ambulatory element. As a case in point, during our conversation for this research, Serge Clément (b.1950), whose black and white images taken during the last four decades denote a quality that Martha Langford describes as a "formal insistence on photographic

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[2] Carol Payne, "'How Shall We Use These Gifts?' Imaging the Land in the National Film Board of Canada's Still Photography Division," in *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art,* ed. John O'Brian and Peter White (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 155.

seeing"[3], started and ended the interview by stating that he cannot separate his

photographic work from walking.[4] As part of my project I also interviewed several

prominent practitioners including Roy Arden (b. 1957), in Vancouver, who has been

working with photography since the late seventies and for whom "being peripatetic

through the landscape and the city is very important; it is seeing."[5] My work with a

research team involved in the creation of a collectively written history of Canadian

photography and based in the Department of Art History at Concordia University has also

been instrumental to this study.

The written part of my thesis analyses the relationship between photography and

walking through urban space in Canadian art as it has appeared since the middle of the

twentieth century. Complementing this study is a new work of photographic art I have

created entitled *Every Foot of the Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent (2010-2012).* This

unique project presents the viewer with the unprecedented experience of ambulating and

seeing the entire sidewalk along this street, which is one of North America's most

conspicuous and historic places. For this project I photographed the sidewalk space along

both sides of this iconic thoroughfare's eleven kilometers, including the facades of the

buildings from the opposite side of the street. This study produced 2679 photos taken

over a two-year period. In addition to this formal principle, my only other rule for taking

a picture was that there be no people visible in the frame. My objective was to create a

photographic series of prints and a video projection from the initial snapshots. These

[3] Martha Langford, "A Short History of Photography, 1900-2000," in *The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century*, ed. Anne Whitelaw, Brian Foss, and Sandra Paikowsky (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 294.
[4] Serge Clement, interview by author, Montreal, Quebec, October 28, 2011.
[5] Roy Arden, interview by author, South Vancouver, British Columbia, April 5, 2012.

would show the empty sidewalk space in a way that maintains the geographical sequence of the street while at the same time subjectively rearranging and thickening its temporal representation. *Every Foot of the Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent (2010-2012)* is discussed in detail at the end of my thesis, including the parameters established for the project, the reasons for these, their implications and outcomes.

My written examination of this topic comes from the perspective of an art historian engaged with urban space and social theory, who seeks to identify art photography created during the last sixty years that specifically denotes a fundamental connection between photography and walking. There has been an important amount of creative activity in this area due to the commercialization of small portable cameras, yet a limited number of texts have been written on this subject. While this association is raised in only a few publications, it is generally only mentioned in light of a broader subject.[6] There are no sustained studies expressly concerned with the individual players and projects and their role, either as contributions to the Modernist genre of street photography or to construct a specific history of photography and walking in Canada. A close study brings out multiple facets of this activity. Photo activity on the street readily evokes genres of reportage, social documentary, decisive moment, and expressive

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[6] See Johanne Sloan, "Bill Vazan's Urban Coordinates," in *Bill Vazan: Walking into the Vanishing Point* (Montreal: Vox, 2009), 86; Olivier Asselin, *Le Flâneur et l'allégorie: Essaie sur la photographie de Charles Gagnon* (Montréal: Dazibao, 2006); Penny Cousineau, "Charles Gagnon: Passage vers cet ailleurs," in *Charles Gagnon Observations* (Québec: Musée du Québec, 1998), 11-17; David Harris, "A Sympathetic Detachment: Gabor Szilasi's Hungarian and Quebec Photographs," in *The Eloquence of the Everyday* (Joliette and Ottawa: Musée d' Art de Joliette and Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, 2009), 13-41 ; Martha Langford, "A Conversation with Tom Gibson, Annotated by Martha Langford," in *Tom Gibson: False Evidence Appearing Real* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, 1993), 9-47; David Moore, "Françoise et l'espoir," in *Françoise Sullivan Rétrospective* (Québec: Ministère des Affaires Culturelles, 1981), 86.

photography. Yet photography and walking are also fundamental in conceptual mapping, such as in the work of dancer Françoise Sullivan[7] and sculptor Bill Vazan,[8] as well as in photographer Jeff Wall's meticulously staged street scenes.[9]

Within the broader scope of works addressed, one part of my analysis will concentrate specifically on work done around la Main. Since the 1950s, Saint-Laurent Boulevard has been the focal point for numerous and different types of photographic works involving or representing ambulation. As Saint-Laurent is also a cultural space, with a history of photographic galleries, it has also been the location of their exhibition. The diverse nature of these projects has provided points of entry to other significant photographic works created in different metropolitan areas and regions of the country.

Travel is frequently associated with documentary photography and foot travel cannot be disassociated from the modernist genre of street photography. While street photography can be traced all the way back to the early days of the medium, this style is generally associated with the spontaneity and speed afforded by the use of portable cameras and multi-frame roll film that was developed later. Street photography is readily linked with photographers like Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004) and André Kertész (1894-1985), Helen Levitt (b.1913) in New York City, and Lisette Model (1901-1983) during the first half of the twentieth century in France, or Robert Frank (b.1924), Lee Friedlander (b.1934), and Garry Winogrand (b.1928) in post-World War II America, all of whom played a seminal role in the development and evolution of this photographic approach.

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[7] Françoise Sullivan, "Walk from the Musée d'art contemporain to the musée des beaux-arts and back ," 1970.
[8] Bill Vazan, "Walking into the Vanishing Point, Northward on St-Laurent," 1970.
[9] Jeff Wall, "Mimic," 1982, is one notorious example.

My thesis discusses the overlap between two elements that are already richly developed independent signifiers in art history. This analysis takes into account conceptual walking projects that include photographs in a documentary form and present them in light of their historical association with photography. Studying the combination of photography and walking in Canadian art promises a new historical understanding of significant photographers, artists, and works in this field. Photographs that involve ambulation often have meaningful theoretical connections. Be they documentary or conceptual in nature, linked to modernism or postmodern ideas, these photos are often related to social, philosophical, and aesthetic questions that contribute significantly to artistic discourse. They need to be studied from the dual perspectives of research and creation.

La Main is the ideal space to anchor this project. It is charged with multiple layers of "photographic" history that are integrally linked with my theme; at the same time, it is a pivotal geographic landmark on the map of Montreal that is simultaneously associated with cultural change and with artists walking.

In the 1950s, Sam Tata (1911-2005) regularly walked the streets around la Main in Montreal, photographing the animated, diasporic life representative of this part of town.[10] His photos reveal the evident influence of the European humanist documentary tradition represented by Henri Cartier-Bresson, whom he counted as a friend: the photographer wandering the city on foot in quest of a special moment that appears only through the release of the camera shutter at a precise moment. Langford reminds us that

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[10] See Sam Tata, "Bargain Hunting on the Main," 1958, and Sam Tata, "Chinatown," 1959, in Pierre Anctil, *Saint-Laurent: Montréal's Main* (Sillery: Septentrion, 2002), 57 and 60.

Tata's lifelong interest for street photography and reportage, often involving strangers in the street, informed his environmental portraits, and contributed to "recording the faces of Canadian culture"[11] through photography.

The area around Saint-Laurent Boulevard is a space where, for several photographers and artists, "the photographer's studio becomes the street,"[12] as Langford notes. Melvin Charney (b.1935), Raymonde April (b.1953), Clara Gutsche (b.1949), and Edward Hillel (b.1953) are but a few of the many artists who found their own photographic inspiration somewhere on or near la Main (Fig. 1). Their ambulation in this neighbourhood resulted in photographs that reveal more than a central geographic passage of the city; their images divulge subjective aesthetic strategies applied that reveal contrasting mental and material signifiers in the politics of a hybrid community. Irit Rogoff explains as she discusses space and the cartographies of twentieth century visual culture:

> The dimension of subjectivity and of differentiation is added to the model of geography as named and emplaced location with the analysis of space, through the social and the psychic constitutions of differentiated and defined realms. Its significance initially for a critical discussion of 'geography' is that space is not understood through the named activity for which it is intended […]. Instead an active process of 'spatialization' replaces a static notion of named spaces […].[13]

In her conclusion to *Space, the City and Social Theory*, urban theorist Fran Tonkiss writes: "In considering how urban space is socially produced and reproduced, we are concerned with the ways that spatial arrangements and social action condition each other. But we are also concerned with the elusive or minor ways that social actors make space

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[11] Langford, "Short History of Photography," 287.
[12] Ibid., 295.
[13] Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 23.

for themselves, to their own fit if not exactly their own design."[14] This passage refers to a whole body of research dealing with urban space in which culture, social categories, and space interact in influencing various interpretations of the city. Tonkiss's perspective is of particular theoretical import to my project because the idea of "space," and particularly urban space, is a central preoccupation of the walking photographer.

Twentieth-century writing has established an enduring link between walking and the *flâneur.* For Susan Sontag, "photography first comes into its own as an extension of the eye of the middle-class *flâneur*."[15] This figure is a "type" inseparable from the Parisian landscape;[16] yet it is also associated with the idea of the photographer strolling through the modern city, looking to capture through the lens what is visible to everyone, but that only he or she sees. Throughout the second half of the last century, the zone around la Main was a space of magnetic attraction to photographers in quest of a lively everyday street setting. This kind of street photography, in which anonymous passers-by caught unaware became photographic objects, has radically changed in Quebec, even to the point of disappearing altogether. In 1998, following the publication of a street photograph taken in Montreal ten years earlier without the consent of the person depicted, a Quebec Supreme Court ruling banned the circulation of any photograph made without the prior consent of anyone figuring in the image. With the passage of this law, street photography became virtually illegal in the province. Images showing any person on the street (or anywhere, for that matter) would henceforth have to be either staged or illicit.

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[14] Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2005), 150.
[15] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Dell, 1977), 55.
[16] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Bleknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 417.

Photographers in the new millennium have had to find novel ways to interact with public space as anxiety over privacy has become paramount. Meanwhile, street photography took on new meaning with *Google Street View* (Fig. 2). Here the ambulating photographer is replaced with an unmarked corporate camera methodically driven throughout the city to take clandestine photos of all the street and sidewalk space it comes across, with the resulting images available to viewers around the globe.

An enormous body of images created at the intersection between photography and walking have been created in Canada over the last sixty years. While these images originate from all across the country, they are mainly concentrated in the larger urban centers. A number of critical studies focussing on spatio-temporal ontology have addressed photography or walking in art individually.[17] As noted earlier, no scholarly texts have dealt specifically with Canadian artists or works in relation to photography and the peripatetic use of space. None the less, photographic historiography since the nineties exposes the consistent presence of works involving this combination as seen in anthologies, exhibition catalogues, monographs and artist's books across the country.

Looking more closely at this relationship has led me to theoretical texts dealing with city space. Space is where the material and the cognitive meet in photography and walking. It is an area sometimes imagined by the photographer before the actual photo is taken, and for the photographer it is the place of physical contact with the subject. When viewed through photography, the city can also be thought of, to borrow from Tonkiss, "a

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[17] See Thierry Davila, *Marcher, créer. Déplacements, flâneries, dérives dans l'art de la fin du XXe siècle* (Paris : Éditions du Regard, 2002) and Musée Picasso, Antibes, *Les figures de la marche* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000).

distinctive or unified space in its own right," or rather "'bits and pieces' of space, sociality and built form."[18] On the one hand, walking has a "common sense" association with street photography; on the other hand, photography's link to walking is less obvious, even when thinking of conceptual ambulatory projects. After all, the photographic object is static and walking is dynamic. This duality cannot be ignored. However, photography, even when intended purely as the indexical documentation of an event, as is the case with many conceptual works from the 1960s and 1970s, can also become part of the artwork itself or indeed replace it. The two contact sheets constituting Bill Vazan's *Walking into the Vanishing Point* (1970) are prime examples of this.[19]

Bibliographic Review

A study of Canadian photography and walking entails looking at a vast space composed of a variety of different places, each one bearing its own history, memory, identity, and culture. Many of the most prominent images and projects are located in the country's major cities, but to focus only on metropolitan centers would be borrowing from existing European and American models. Photographers also show us places that are themselves in transition. In Ian MacEachern's 1960s documentary project of the changing face of Saint-John, New Brunswick, the photographer walked the streets of the city's north end, producing a "magisterial study of dilapidated houses" at a critical time of urban renewal for this city.[20]

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[18] Tonkiss, 148.
[19] Bill Vazan, *Walking into the Vanishing Point*, (Montreal: Vox, 2009).
[20] Langford, "Short History of Photography," 285.

My point of departure for this research is Martha Langford's "A Short History of Photography, 1900-2000." This chapter is the most inclusive and up-to-date historical review of photography in Canada during the last century;[21] it will serve as a resource for identifying the leading Canadian photographers and artists of import for this thesis (in fact, of the 197 photographers and artists Langford presents, at least forty are relevant to this analysis).[22] Langford's survey also provides a critical perspective on the numerous associations that exist between figurative and metaphoric space in Canadian photography. Historical period headings like "Pictorialism into Modernism" are reminders that photography in Canada was sensitive to Eurocentric and American trends in the visual arts. The text considers social, documentary, and conceptual photography, among other themes, where Canadian photographers and artists have worked to develop an aesthetic vocabulary prominently associated with a distinctive Canadian visual interpretation of a national psyche.[23] The importance of regional and cultural representation as mediated by photography is also present throughout the survey. Langford's list of photographers and prominent photographic projects is thematically constructed across the twentieth century

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[21] While different survey texts have looked at various periods, a bibliographic analysis of photography in Canada, performed for a graduate art history course, revealed that as of 2010 there was still no scholarly survey dealing with a complete history of Canadian photography. In 1996 Joan Schwartz edited a special issue on "Canadian Photography" for the journal *History of Photography*, but its focus is the nineteenth century and modern photography in Canada.

[22] While this research will not provide an exhaustive listing of photographers and artists whose works relate to walking photography, the *Fond Documentaires* Vox, as well as the database at Artexte, will serve to further inform my list.

[23] For an in-depth theoretical discussion on what can be considered as Canadian photography since the 1950s, see Penny Cousineau-Levine, *Faking Death: Canadian Art Photography and the Canadian Imagination* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill University Press, 2003).

up to the digital era introduced in the 1980s, highlighting how Canadian photography "continues to mark a point of intersection between documentation and expression."[24]

Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* proposes a fresh perspective on walking through many connections: intellectual and physical, creative and practical, as well as historical and political. Her book examines how social and cultural changes that have transformed the elementary act of walking, its interpretation, and the diverse roles of ambulation as an effective agent. Solnit pays careful attention to the applications of walking in the visual arts during the last century, including different links with photography. This approach is an inversion of my angle of analysis, which always starts from a photographic perspective, and therefore contributes to a richer comprehension of this unique relationship. In addressing the growing influence of walking in various Western intellectual domains and its interpretation in regards to specific kinds of spaces (private, public, psychic), Solnit illuminates the way in which the combination of walking and photography creates a paradox, as the second freezes the first in time and space.[25] There are no parallel histories of walking in Canada, though some great walks have been taken and Kodaked along the way; a prime example is the odyssey of John Hugh Gillis (who is the first to have completed a walk across Canada) and his companions who set out from North Sydney, Nova Scotia, January 31st 1906 to cross the country by foot, a journey they documented with snapshots.[26] *Wanderlust* therefore provides a rigorous point of reference for a critical examination of the latter part of my photography and

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[24] Ibid., 309.

[25] Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 267.

[26] See George Edward Hart, *Transcontinental Pedestrians: Canada's First Cross-Country Walk (1906)* (Markham: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2006).

walking binary. Solnit does not refer to Canadian artists, and this omission underlines the dominant presence of European and American influences in informing photographers' ways of looking at city space.

Space is a complex idea, and there are several recent, influential theoretical approaches to it that my study takes into consideration. As already mentioned Tonkiss's book, *Space, the City and Social Theory*, interprets the city as a distinct space from a sociological perspective, while remaining attentive to points of view informed by other academic fields. As Tonkiss notes in her introduction, Louis Wirth and the Chicago School theorists of the 1920s and 1930s were the first to introduce "a distinctively sociological approach to the study of the city."[27] She draws on the work of Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, Edward Casey, and Elizabeth Wilson, each having developed a unique theoretical approach to city space. In addition to her review of the various approaches to urban space formulated during the past century, Tomkiss's ideas about subjectivity and locality are important concepts. Her notion of community within the urban environment helps us to appreciate the city as a distinctive space composed in turn by its own spaces. As she writes, this idea of city space within city space –neighbourhoods– also refers to "modes of urban 'sociation', to borrow Simmel's term"[28] to explain the interaction among individuals that form society. Tonkiss's consideration of different systems of grouping among individuals in a space defined as the city is one of several concepts that will be valuable in my analysis of city spaces, such as la Main, where photography and walking meet.

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[27] Tonkiss, 2.
[28] Ibid., 1.

The 1960s was a focal point of change that included salient new artistic currents where photography was central. Interdisciplinary works marked the transition from modernity to post-modernity and photos were attributed with a new symptomatic role in conceptual undertakings that saw its use in opposition from fine art photography. *The Sixties in Canada* show produced four decades later by the National Gallery of Canada looks back on this time; a section of the exhibition catalogue is devoted to a close examination of the most celebrated photographers and artists and their application of the medium as they were working within existing traditions or establishing new conventions. For Pierre Dessureault, author of the chapter "Photography in Question," this was a period when: "Relying on its own unique vocabulary, photography has ushered in an era of multidisciplinarity."[29] Several photographs featured in this chapter involve an ambulatory element. Dessureault discusses a turning-point in Canadian photography at a time when humanist and documentary photography were well established; his examination also considers some of the important players in relation to the social landscape, architecture and landscape, and the photographic medium before his conclusion dealing with the second half of the sixties when photography also became "a tool for artists"[30] with vanguard projects anchored in a conceptual archetype. This text involves several photographers and artists who are seminal in my research, including Lutz Dille (1922-2008), Bill Vazan (b.1933), Françoise Sullivan (b.1925), and Jeff Wall (b.1946), to mention only a few.

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[29] Pierre Dessureault, "Photography in Question," in *The Sixties in Canada* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2005), 165.
[30] Ibid., 146.

Methodology and Historiographical Context

The photographic representation of walking goes back to the early days of the

medium. At the time of the invention, the act of walking was frequently staged for the

camera. As a result of the long exposure times imposed by early photographic materials,

subjects were made to be still in often awkward poses to avoid blurring. James Borcoman,

commenting on Charles Nègre's " Chimney Sweeps Walking" (1851), a salted paper print

showing a mid-nineteenth century urban Parisian scene that is part of the NGC

photographic collection, notes:

> He [Nègre] used the camera to extend the painter's vision in a search for visual
> information on human activities and, more specifically, for studies of motion.
> Here, however, the sweeps have been posed to simulate motion. […] Nègre
> became known among his contemporaries as the earliest of the street
> photographers.[31]

J.G. Parks' "Rideau Street, Ottawa" (ca. 1865), a stereograph made a few years after

Nègre's image, was selected by Ralph Greenhill to illustrate his survey of early

photography in Canada.[32] The high-angle view of a main street in the capital of the

province of Canada, taken two years before it became a country, also provides a fine

example of this phenomenon. This everyday street scene, where all appear oblivious to

the presence of the photographer, shows clearly outlined figures of children and a couple

standing still by a street corner in the lower part of the picture, while other individuals

caught in mid-stride take on a ghostly allure. Of course, by 1950, such technological

obstacles were part of a distant past. While these images predate the period on which my

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[31] James Borcoman, *19th-Century French Photographs* (Ottawa: National Gallery of
Canada, 2010), 118.
[32] J.G. Parks, "Rideau Street, Ottawa," ca. 1865, in Ralph Greenhill, *Early Photography
in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1965), plate 34.

analysis will focus, they provide an important illustration of the longstanding link between photography and walking, a link that dates from the earliest days of the medium.

Traveling by foot has a historic association with documentary photography and the cultural practice of street photography, a phenomenon Mary Warner Marien claims is "as old as the medium itself."[33] The postwar period in the United States introduced a new type of space for the street photographer, one that also influenced the work of photographers north of the border. Colin Westerbeck observes: "After the Second World War, American photography was marked by disillusionment and by a quest for the poetic – transcending the insignificance of the subject and the random clicking of the shutter – which replaced formalism and professional norms. Following the example of Walker Evans and his carefully considered procedures […], it is in the street that 'new photographers' encounter that America whose transient clues they wish to capture."[34]

According to the *Oxford Companion to the Photograph*: "In the broadest sense, all photography not intended purely as a means of artistic expression might be considered 'documentary', […] providing evidence of a moment in time."[35] In this sense, documentary photographs figure prominently when examining the relationship of photography to ambulation through the city. This in turn emphasizes the importance of having a clear understanding of documentary photography in Canada during the period covered by my study. This category of work shows solid ties to American and European

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[33] Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History,* 2nd ed. (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2006), 340.
[34] Colin Westerbeck, "On the Road and in the Street: The Post-War Period in the United," in *The New History of Photography,* ed. Michel Frizot (Köln: Könemann, 1998), 641.
[35] Robin Lenman, ed., *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 173.

photographic practices, although its subject matter often reflects concerns specific to local social issues (such as those seen in numerous NFB-commissioned works). Indeed, among the major influences in 1950 were figures such as Paul Strand, Walker Evans, Henry Cartier-Bresson, and Andre Kertész.

By the middle of the twentieth century, street photography had become a recognized source of subjective expression for a growing group of art photographers.[36] The images of Swiss-born photographer Robert Frank (b.1924), who traveled across the United States in 1955, have reached iconic status. The photos seen in his monograph, *The Americans*, (1959) comprise a poetic narrative that illustrates the contrast between the local and the enormity of the country in which it exists. Hence, while Canadian photography carries its own distinctive character, in documentary projects showing a bias for the "human" element over the "social" component,[37] the proximity of American and European influences during a good part of the twentieth century cannot be underestimated when doing a reading of Canadian photographs.[38]

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[36] Marien, 340.
[37] Cousineau-Levine, *Faking Death,* 51.
[38] Ibid., 4.

Chapter One

Walking in Canadian Art Photography: Figurative and Conceptual Representation

Photographers [leave] us not their walks, as poets do, but the fruits of those walks.

Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust*[39]

In the 1950s, the perambulatory component in photography was a fact of life. Photographers often walked to get to areas they wanted to photograph. If these places were reached by motor transportation, once there it was walking that provided the means for the photographer's phenomenal engagement. He or she ambulated through these spaces repeatedly, from different angles, in different lights, and for different reasons. The focus for these photographers was to isolate distinctive forms and moments defined by poetic tropes or formal representations – and often both – for their documentary projects. Walking was part of the process and the snapshot allowed for the concrete capture of a special moment, transposed onto film through the camera. Walking itself was not initially seen as a means of artistic expression, but by the end of the decade was revealed as a possibility through the ascent of action in art.

Snapshots appeared much earlier, at the end of the nineteenth century, with the release of the first Kodak camera made for the amateur market. Initially, these cameras were destined for private use, allowing anyone in possession to spontaneously create photographs of their environment; as Sarah Greenough notes, snapshots "were never

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Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 190.

intended to be seen on the walls of museums or reproduced in books."[40] The snapshot's

essential qualities of spontaneity, presence, and freedom can be linked to the controlled

creative impulse of American abstract expressionist painting in the post World War II

period. In discussing the difference between art and life in their research on the history

of street photography, Colin Westerbeck and Joel Meyerowitz write that the abstract

expressionist approach to painting is "one method of removing the barriers between the

two."[41] So is the snapshot for many photographers.

Solnit, while discussing the American performance and interdisciplinary artist

Allan Kaprow's writing on Jackson Pollock's painting, explains that, "The gesture was

primary, the painting secondary, a mere souvenir of that gesture which was now its

subject."[42] Within a decade, Kaprow's proposal would also be applied to the analysis of

walking and photography occurring within the vanguard movements of the 1960s.

Meanwhile, the Situationist International[43] theorist Guy Debord introduced a different

model through which to engage urban space by means of walking. For Debord,

"Psychogeography" involved the study of the consequences of the city's geography as

expressed in an individual's psyche and behaviour. His "Theory of the Dérive"

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[40] Sarah Greenough, introduction to *The Art of the American Snapshot 1888-1978: From the Collection of Robert E. Jackson*, eds. Sarah Greenough and Diane Waggoner (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2007), 5.
[41] Colin Westerbeck and Joel Meyerowitz, *Bystander: A History of Street Photography* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1994), 359.
[42] Solnit, *Wanderlust,* 268.
[43] This was a French avant-garde intellectual group formed in the early 1950s and headed by Debord. Walking plays a central role in the SI's utopian vision of the city that simultaneously radically rejects the rational and practical structure of the modern city. Patrick Straram (1934-1988) was an early member of the movement who immigrated to Quebec in the 1960s; he was influential within the local artistic and intellectual scene. See: Marc Vachon, *L'arpenteur de la ville: L'utopie urbaine situationniste et Patrick Straram* (Montréal: Triptyque, 2003).

encouraged individuals to allow themselves to drift through the city on foot while remaining aware of the changing atmospheres encountered. Solnit quotes Greil Marcus's interpretation of this Debordian theory as follows: "The point [….] was to encounter the unknown as a facet of the known, astonishment on the terrain of boredom, innocence in the face of experience."[44]

While multidisciplinary creative and intellectual concepts within the larger art world were exerting increasing pressure on the modernist establishment, in Canada photography faced determined hegemonic resistance to its acceptance as an art form in its own right.[45] Moreover, while Helen Levitt and Lisette Model already had been recognized as serious photographers in the States during the pre-war years, there were no well-known social documentary women photographers yet in Canada. The photographers perambulating the street were mainly male practitioners. In 1959, Robert Frank's *The Americans* was published in America.[46] Frank had made road trips by automobile across the United States during the mid-fifties, taking photos that in his book present an acerbic narrative of the social and political climate in America. The automobile is a recurring element in the photos of the Swiss-born photographer, yet this body of images – described by Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Benjamin Buchloh. as "marked by the documentary impulse to make photography a tool of political

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[44]Solnit, *Wanderlust,* 212.

[45] Andrea Kunard and Carol Payne note that "photography's full entry into the art museum, art school curriculum, and art marketplace" did not occur in Canada before the 1960s. Andrea Kunard and Carol Payne, "Writing Photography in Canada: A Historiography*,"* in *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada*, ed. Carol Payne and Andrea Kunard (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 232.

[46] The original version was published in 1958 in Paris as *Les Américains*.

enlightenment"[47] – is canonic in the history of street photography. Through his photos, Frank would go on to exert significant influence on the way ambulating photographers in Canada framed different places and spaces.

During this period, photos taken in Canada involving walking and peripatetic space were predominantly associated with the domain of documentary photography and photo-reportage (a popular scheme in magazines[48]). Documentary photographs dating back to the early days of the medium were part of institutional collections, but painting was sovereign at Canada's foremost art institution, the National Gallery of Canada.[49] The NGC only rarely exhibited contemporary street photographs.[50] Documentary photography in the 1950s was associated with the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), not the National Gallery.[51] The NFB, created in 1939 by British documentarist John Grierson, was a pivot for Canadian visual propaganda,[52] and by 1950, its Still Photography Division was the heart of acquisition and commissioning of Canadian photography. This included documentary projects, although Langford notes that the immense popularity of the photo story meant that, "in this period, the NFB photography

[47] Hal Foster et al., *Art Since 1900* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 431.
[48] Langford, "Short History of Photography," 283.
[49] Anne Whitelaw, "Whiffs of Balsam, Pine, and Spruce: Art Museums and the Production of a Canadian Aesthetic," in *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art,* ed. John O'Brian and Peter White (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 179.
[50] The first show to present photographs that included contemporary documentary images was in 1957 when the NGC exposed the iconic *Family of Man* show, created by Edward Steichen in 1955 while he headed the Museum of Modern Art's photography department.
[51] The NGC's photographic collection was founded in 1967 under the direction of James Borcoman.
[52] Martha Langford, introduction to *Contemporary Canadian Photography from the Collection of the National Film Board* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1984), 7.

is less often documentary than it is editorial, didactic, or promotional in style."[53] The

Stills Division played a marked role in the careers of several of the photographers

discussed in this text, such as Tom Gibson and Gabor Szilasi. Conveying a positive

image of the nation was still the Division's primary *raison d'être*, and "social

documentary" photographs were paramount in this task. Grierson is credited with actually

introducing the term "documentary."[54] In her study of the National Film Board, Still

Photography Division, Carol Payne defines the term "'social documentary" as meaning

"images which promise reliable information about individuals and society as a whole."[55]

However these images were punctiliously selected and edited to show the nation under

the most positive light, and "the Division remained a propagandistic vehicle for

governmental interest."[56] The NFB was an important and influential storefront for

modernist photographers in this period and later – even though its acquisition strategy

was subject to important change.[57] For staff photographers like Chris Lund (1923-83), or

freelancers like Ted Grant (b.1929)[58] and others on a long list who collaborated with the

Division, walking was arguably more of an ad hoc measure than a conscious

photographic strategy. After all, as Langford explains, "photo-reportage focuses on the

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[53] Ibid., 8.
[54] Carol Payne, "A Canadian Document: The National Film Board of Canada's Still Photography Division," in *A Canadian Document* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, 1999), 14.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 31.
[57] By the mid 1950s, only two full-time positions for photographers remained at the Division; photographs made on a freelance basis became increasingly present in the collection. Ibid., 23.
[58] On his website, Grant is described as "the father of Canadian photojournalism." See "Bio," http://tedgrantphoto.com/Bio.htm (accessed June 15, 2012).

typical and makes it look unusual,"[59] rather than focusing on ambulation, that, while

unavoidable to a degree, depending on the assignment, would in these circumstances be

mostly regarded as a waste of time. Nonetheless, the NFB's influence was still very much

present for photographers in the subsequent decades, even as photos increasingly

incorporated language and semiotic links to elements outside the frame of the photograph.

By the time Lutz Dille arrived in Canada from Germany in the early 1950s, the

"freer, looser style,"[60] to use Sarah Greenough's term, afforded by the snapshot had

already been thoroughly appropriated by photographers like Kertész, Cartier-Bresson,

Model, and many others. A couple of decades later, the snapshot would come to denote

an aesthetic genre in its own right, associated with the vernacular photography of

American photographers like Garry Winogrand and Lee Friedlander, and strongly

promoted by John Szarkowsky at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.[61] Dille's eye

was flawless in catching and giving photographic form to tense moments drawn from the

circus of life. He found his subject matter while walking in the streets of Toronto, as well

as in cities in Europe and America. Public spaces such as outdoor markets constituted

frequent settings for his photos. In his unpublished text entitled "Confessions of a

Streetwalker," Dille shares an intimate account of his photographic experience:

> During the fifties and sixties walking city streets was for me a fascinating
> experience. I am a photographer – and I wanted to catch It – the exciting chance
> encounter – at the right time – in the right location – under the right light … To be
> able to record the human condition with a camera and film is I think one of the
> great steps forward in our time.[62]

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[59] Langford, *"Short History of Photography,"* 283.

[60] Greenough, introduction to *American Snapshot,* 2.

[61] Eisinger, 12.

[62] Lutz Dille, "Confessions of a Streetwalker," unpublished manuscript, ca. 1980-85, Archives of the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, artist's file. National Gallery of Canada.

Dille's thoughts reveal an illuminated view of street photography that was not uncommon for photographers at the time, and is not limited to this period only. It is a romantic perspective that remains for some photographers to this day, and goes back to Atget and even earlier.[63] For them, walking becomes the bridge to the different stages whereupon we can see the ongoing play of the human condition in public spaces.

For de Certeau, the city is a language, such that engaging it on foot corresponds to "speaking that language,"[64] while Barthes's post-structuralist thought compares the city to a text. The street photographer is not only an interpreter, but also one of the Barthesian "readers"[65] of this space. The ambulating photographer is a reader who not only translates, but also becomes co-author of this text, whose subjective input contributes to a new recording of these lived spaces. Combining de Certeau's and Barthes's ideas results in spaces where Dille's idealistic interpretation of his craft flourishes, allowing the photographer to speak a language that describes a play in which he or she is also actor.

Like Dille, Michel Lambeth was busy with his camera in the streets of Toronto during the 1950s. Guided by a poetic approach to the city, his photographs illustrate a constant awareness of the street photographer's engagement with contingent elements within the urban landscape, which through his lens frequently become metaphors. Writing about Lambeth during this period, Maia-Mari Sutnik says that he photographed while "learning how to observe in full stride and capture the temporal in motion, how to transform his vision into revelatory 'truths-of-the-moment,' and how to create expressive

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[63] Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, 108-109.
[64] Solnit, *Wanderlust,* 213.
[65] Julian Stallabrass, *Paris Pictured* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2002), no pagination.

metaphors."[66] Sutnik's statement is an important reminder of the athleticism and automaticism within this mode of creation.

As noted earlier, during the 1950s, several photographers who saw a primary link between walking and photography immigrated to Canada. Several of these were from Europe. In conversation with Henri Béhar and Michel Guerrin many years after *The Americans*, Frank commented that his photos represented "the voyage of a European in a country that he crosses for the first time. You are on a beach, you dive into the waves."[67] For European street photographers like Dille, Fred Herzog, and Szilasi, as well as many others, walking was not a metaphor for their active exploration of a new continent. Instead it was their way to establish a bond with what they photographed. The colour slides[68] Herzog started to make when he arrived in Vancouver show a city that, as Christos Dikeakos recounts, is mostly gone and leaves the viewer with a sense of "melancholy and joy at the same time."[69] For Dikeakos, the melancholic aspect is due to the disappearance of places in the city, while the joy is connected to the enduring presence of vernacular elements related to working class architecture, or in other words, to the presence of an anti-bourgeois punctum in Herzog's photos.

In 1957, Jean-Paul Gill (b.1928), a photographer working for the city of Montreal, took recurrent walks to photograph a popular neighbourhood on the eastern edge of

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[66] Maia-Mari Sutnik, introduction and acknowledgements to *Michel Lambeth Photographer* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1998), 8.

[67] Sarah Greenough, *Looking In: Robert Frank's "The Americans"* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2009), 120.

[68] As historian Claudia Gochman notes, Herzog is "one of the early masters of colour photography, even before the generation of William Eggleston and Stephen Shore." Claudia Gauchman, "Fred Herzog: In Colour," in *Fred Herzog Photographs* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), 1.

[69] Christos Dikeakos, interview by author, South Vancouver, British Columbia, April 6, 2012.

boulevard Saint-Laurent below Sherbrooke Street. His assignment was to photograph the

old, densely packed, brick-and-wood houses along the narrow streets of the low-income

Faubourg Saint-Laurent. At the time, this area had the highest concentration of gambling

houses and brothels in North-America. Gill's photos[70] were meant to serve as visual

proof of a lurid space that the city wanted to demolish and replace with a low-income

housing project, to be called Cité Radieuse.[71] The original motivation behind these photos

was not to create a neutral visual archive of a neighborhood before it was to be

demolished, but instead the images were intended as proof of a dreadful "before" in order

to rationalize the creation of a new space "after".[72] Gill's photographs, like many of those

from the years of the Great Depression, were meant to denounce difficult living

conditions. To this effect they are frontal and direct, mimicking the aesthetic

characteristics of photos by Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange from the 1930s. Like

Evans, Gill sometimes used a harsh flash to maximize the dramatic effect in his black and

white photos. However, the figures in these Faubourg Saint-Laurent images are not filthy,

or dressed in rags. What we see in these photos are worn-out buildings from the

nineteenth century where all sorts of conventional neighborhood businesses also appear:

corner grocery stores, specialized merchants, motor garages, and the inevitable corner

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[70] Archives de la Ville de Montréal, 2010.

[71] Throughout most of the 1950s, city planners worked on this social development project; it would be completed in 1959 and named the Habitations Jeanne-Mance. This place, attached to the Maine's east flank below Sherbrook Street, was primary to mid-century urban change in the city; the Corporation d'Habitation Jeanne-Mance describes this housing project as "le premier grand projet de rénovation urbaine au centre-ville de Montréal." Corporation d'Habitations Jeanne-Mance, "Historique," Habitations Jeanne-Mance, CHJM, 2010, http://www.chjm.ca/#historique (accessed November 4, 2010).

[72] This project became known as the plan Dozois. Paul Dozois, a member of the city's Executive Committee, was the principal author for this idea, which was largely financed by the Provincial and Federal governments.

taverns and brasseries. These represented a diversity of spaces that were both social and

economic vectors in the area and micro pivots in what was in essence a community. This

Gemeinschaft [73] all but disappeared with the construction of the utopian reconstruction

project centered around high-rise apartment buildings, townhouses, empty green space,

and parking lots. Gill's photos show an array of streetscapes and back alleys in the area

before the change took place; most photos include an identification number placed within

the setting, a strategy that further imbeds a negative connotation in the image, which

becomes a "mug shot" of a place. Despite Gill's intention to show a dilapidated

neighborhood, a space that could be interpreted, to borrow Tonkiss's words, as a "modern

equivalent of the heterotopia of crisis in Foucault's account,"[74] his photos instead reveal

places and streets mostly walked not by tramps but by ordinary working-class people.

These photos also indicate that some inhabitants of the Faubourg Saint-Laurent were

proud to pose for Gill as he walked the narrow sidewalks of the area with his camera

(Fig. 3); they were probably oblivious to this detective's agenda and to the fact that these

images would be central in the city's plan to bulldoze their homes. This synthesis of

detective work, walking, and photography is a combination that would be at the core of

many other conceptual art projects during the latter part of the twentieth century.[75]

A few years later, Melvin Charney (b.1935) was also walking and taking photos a

couple of blocks south of where Gill did his work, but his images were of a distinctly

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[73] This term, coined by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, describes "a mode of interaction where social ties are based on mutual dependence." As Tonkiss notes, it is distinct from *Gesellschaft,* which refers to a more "formal" mode of interaction related to "rational interest rather than mutual identity." Tonkiss, 12.
[74] Ibid.,133.
[75] Among these, Vito Acconci created *Following Piece* (1969) in New York, and different works made by Sophie Calle and Francis Alÿs during the 1980s and 90s have become emblematic of this category of art. See: Davila, 100-109.

different nature. Allesandra Latour explains that "For Melvin Charney the city is a place

of knowledge, an 'encyclopedia' in which architecture becomes the metaphorical

representation of human beings."[76] *The Main* (Fig. 4) is a series of frontal views Charney

took in 1965[77] of the buildings along boulevard Saint-Laurent between (what was then)

boulevard Dorchester and rue Sainte-Catherine; the bordering images were cut and

combined in sequence to "create a continuous image [or] a panorama"[78] that resulted in

one continuous photograph for each side of the street. For Charney, an architect and

multi-disciplinary artist, "the photographer as an artist is an observer, obliged to remain

outside the melee."[79] He established a peripatetic connection with this section of the

sidewalk for a work that he conceptualized as a walk through a corridor, and that he

further describes as follows:

> A photograph of a street, however, transforms the space into an image of itself,
> into an object reflecting this "self." This becomes a second way of looking at a
> street. There are no longer any voids or absences. The street is taken as an object,
> a defined place; the specific form of the place determined by its capacity to absorb
> the passage of people within its confines, and the character of its enclosure.[80]

Sequential photographs that map urban trajectories would become a recurrent

strategy during the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1962, the American artist

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[76] Allesandra Latour, "The Object and Objectification of Architecture," In *Parables and Other Allegories: The Work of Melvin Charney 1975-1990* (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1991), 14.

[77] In 1975, Charney created a similar work from a walk along another historic thoroughfare in Montreal: he walked roughly three kilometers and took over 200 photos along Sherbrooke Street. In 1976 he curated and organized another project based on a corridor. *Corridart* was meant to be a six kilometer long public art exhibit along Sherbrooke Street planned as a main cultural event during the 1976 Olympics in Montreal. The exhibit was torn down in a controversial decision by the city's Mayor Drapeau because he saw the artworks as unaesthetic.

[78] Melvin Charney, *Melvin Charney* (Montréal: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2002), 152.

[79] Ibid., 158.

[80] Ibid.

Ed Ruscha photographed *Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations*, which Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Benjamin Buchloh identify as contributing to "certain positions that would subsequently determine Conceptual art [such as] an emphasis on photography… ."[81] This "tautological"[82] method is also prominently associated with Edward Ruscha's work, *Every Building on Sunset Strip* (1966), made the year following Charney's walk for his photos of the Main. Ruscha's foldout panorama is created from photos of every building and space along a famous portion of Sunset Boulevard taken from a car while driving. His spaces are also photographed straight on and depict both sides of the boulevard, producing what Foster et al. describe as "a simulacrum, the set of a Hollywood movie."[83] The fact that these two urban photographic sequences were created in such temporal proximity is a notable example of the synchronicity that existed in the art world at the time. Artists were looking for radical change, which resulted in the acceptance of new creative formulations as important compositions, including the use of serial photographs made by means of walking or traveling in a car.

The decade that celebrated the centenary of the Canadian Confederation was also marked by a succession of developments that shook the foundations of modernism in art. Among these, one is related to the very ontology of art and the other to a new dialectic proposition for understanding the essential features in the photographic landscape. By the end of the 1960s, conceptual art had reached its peak and established fundamental changes that placed ideas in the forefront of artistic practice. For conceptual artists, photography was, in a sense, what walking had always been and still was for many

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[81] Foster et al., 527.
[82] Ibid., 507.
[83] Ibid.

documentary photographers: a means to an end. As Denise Leclerc and Pierre Dessureault explain: "For [conceptual artists], photography served rather as a strategic support for new ideas focusing on the 'dematerialization' of the art object, the depersonalization of the practice of art and its immunity to judgements of an aesthetic nature."[84]

Jeff Wall, whom David Campany sees as "perhaps the most influential artist to reconnect photography to social description of the everyday,"[85] represents walking spaces and walkers in many of his photos. However, one of Wall's early works made at the end of the 1960s is an antithesis to the walking artists' technique and space. *Landscape Manual* (1969-70) combines text and black and white photos; these replace the canonic wild northern Canadian landscape with a contemporary setting. The Vancouver artist designates suburban space as a new landscape that he travels by car and makes use of via a camera and film, photographing from inside the vehicle through the windshield. In his text Wall writes:

> The "regions" which make up the content of the ongoing system are of little importance in and for themselves. Because what we know, or what we actually work with when we work at all, is an awareness of structures—when we make abstractions from these structures to qualitatively different kinds of structures—we understand that what we are doing involves a manipulation of elements or maybe "objects" which are not important to us except in the manner in which we manipulate them.[86]

Wall interpreted location as just one more structural component necessary in the composition of his work. In other words, the landscapes he photographed or later

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[84] Denise Leclerc and Pierre Dessureault, "A New Role for Photography," in *The Sixties in Canada* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2005), 103.

[85] David Campany, "Survey," in *Art and Photography*, ed. David Campany (London: Phaidon, 2003), 29.

[86] Jeff Wall, *Landscape Manual* (Vancouver: Fine Arts Gallery, 1970), 1.

simulated were not to be understood in terms of social or geographical agency, but served purely in a formal capacity that remained situated within the image's borders. Wall's spaces were meant to be orphaned signifiers, just as vanguard modernist works from the mid-twentieth century are to be understood within their own frame of reference.

This approach is diametrically opposed to the one Nathan Lyons introduced in 1966. *Toward a Social Landscape* introduces a new method of interpreting the environment that Langford sees as a "logical extension of mid-century social realism."[87] As Lyons explains, the social landscape "is not an attempt to define but to clarify the meaning of the human condition."[88] This "extended" modernist approach had a significant influence on many photographers in their application of street photography, including Tom Gibson – whose work already showed this tendency, although his first meeting with Lyons was too late for is work to be included in the watershed exhibition, *Toward a Social Landscape –*[89] and Charles Gagnon. This meant that their ambulations were motivated not by a search for specific objects or situations, but by a desire to visually note the interaction between objects and the environment. As Dessureault explains this approach, "landscape was essentially cultural – the realm of urban structures with which human beings interact."[90]

British conceptual artist Richard Long made walking his creative means. In works such as *Line Made by Walking* (1967), Long created a line in grass with his feet by

[87] Langford, "Short History of Photography," 295.
[88] Nathan Lyons, introduction to *Toward a Social Landscape,* ed. Nathan Lyons (New York and Rochester: Horizon Press and George Eastman House of Photography, 1966), 3.
[89] See Martha Langford's conversation with Tom Gibson in Gibson, *False Evidence Appearing Real,* 33.
[90] Dessureault, "Photography in Question," 133.

walking back and forth along the same space; sometimes, the only lasting trace of this

and other walking performances is a photograph. His projects, which might involve walks

lasting several days, are minimalist and survive through a short text or simple frontal

black and white photo. As Solnit observes, Long's "uninhabited images leave most of the

journey up to the viewer's imagination."[91]

By 1970, Long and Ruscha's conceptual projects combining mobility and

photography were well known in the art world. As noted previously, that same year

Françoise Sullivan and Bill Vazan each walked across different spaces in Montreal. In

my separate conversations with these artists, each one confirmed being aware of the

other's work, but not the order in which they occurred.[92] While both took photos at each

street corner during their respective ambulation, Sullivan's walk between two museums

(Fig. 5) – the first of four walks she did during the 1970s –[93] was determined by a

conceptual logic[94] that Vazan resists when describing his work. For him, works created

during that period, such as *Walking into the Vanishing Point* (Fig. 6), and other projects

involving walking or other forms of mobility and photography were all about "extending

the line."[95] As he states: "To me my work at the time was not conceptual: you may use

the word, but I didn't see it as that."[96] *Walking into the Vanishing Point* is made from a

succession of point-and-shoot photos taken at each intersection of the merging lines along

the horizon before him; for this Vazan walked up the entire length of boulevard Saint-

Laurent, crossing the island to complete his walk where the sun sets at the end of the

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[91] Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 271.
[92] Françoise Sullivan, interview by author, Montreal, Quebec, June 21, 2011.
[93] Leclerc and Dessureault, 149.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Bill Vazan, interview by author, Montreal, Quebec, November 19, 2009.
[96] Ibid.

famous street.[97] "Each photo was taken according to a systematic protocol and progressive development – scores of images were thus produced," notes Marie-Josée Jean, "demonstrating the artist's indifference toward any form of pictorial composition or aesthetic convention."[98] It is interesting to note that even though Sullivan and Vazan situate their walks in different ideological spheres, another shared element in both works involves the absence of concern with framing. Sullivan remembers that she looked through the camera's viewfinder to photograph her walk; when asked if she framed her images, her answer is decisive: "Absolutely not."[99] Human presence in photos from both projects, although unplanned, is frequent. This human presence invites us to interpret these images as dealing with space on equal terms with any geographic consideration, even though they are site specific. In discussing distinctions between place and space, Elizabeth Wilson posits that, "For de Certeau space is a 'frequented place,' 'an intersection of moving bodies.' It is a pedestrian who transforms a street into a space – space therefore implying movement and interaction."[100]

In light of de Certeau's theory, the photos in the conceptual work *Lucy Lippard Walking Towards True North* (1969), by the Iain Baxter (b.1936) and Ingrid Baxter (b.1938), the team known as N.E. Thing Co. (1966-78), deal with a place. The black and white photos mounted on graph paper are evidence of the art critic's walk with the artists along a half-kilometer stretch of the Canadian tundra. This photographic document shows desolate places and stands in contrast with the idea of human interaction proposed by de

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[97] Montrealers walk up, or North, along this street, but boulevard Saint-Laurent in reality lies on a longitudinal axis.

[98] Marie-Josée Jean, "The Conceptual Works of Bill Vazan," in *Bill Vazan: Walking into the Vanishing Point* (Montreal: Vox, 2009), 54.

[99] Françoise Sullivan, interview by author, Montreal, Quebec, June 21, 2011.

[100] Wilson, 259.

Certeau.[101] Simultaneously, the technical form of the paper framing the images denotes

the areas where the photos were taken as number coordinates on a map, rather than as

spaces.

The street has been a recurrent theme in Vancouver artist Ian Wallace's

photographic works since the late 1960s. A central figure in Vancouver's artistic and

academic community, Wallace was inspired early in his career by the work of N.E. Thing

Co., as well as by conceptual projects by younger Vancouver artists, "notably Jeff Wall's

Landscape Manual (1969), and Christos Dikeakos's *Instant Photo Information*

(1970)."[102] *My Heroes in the Street* is a series of photos of staged familiar scenes made

with friends on the streets of Vancouver that for Wallace are "grounded in 'reality.'"[103]

This project, made during the 1980s, is based on photos of single individuals on the street,

images that undergo a mutation at the hands of the artist, first through lithography, then

by setting the images on white canvas to obtain their completed form as paintings.

Wallace's multi-layered project works with different levels of space that draw on history,

philosophy, and semiotics, which he merges as "a reminder of the modernity of the social

subject."[104]

Michael Snow (b.1928) also combined different mediums with photography and

the ambulatory gesture for his *Walking Woman Works* series (1961-67). A life-size cutout

of an anonymous female figure walking was placed in different spaces in Toronto where

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[101] As Dessureault notes, Lippard accompanied the artists on this project because she was interested in their "original approach to conceptual art." Leclerc and Dessureault, 106.
[102] Ian Wallace, "Street Photo 1970," in *Unfinished Business: Photographing Vancouver Streets 1955 to 1985*, ed. Bill Jeffries, Glen Lowry, and Jerry Zaslove (North Vancouver and Burnaby: Presentation House Gallery and West Coast Line, 2005), 212.
[103] Ian Wallace, *My Heroes in the Street* (Vancouver: Catriona Jeffries Gallery, 2001), 3.
[104] Ibid.

Snow directed photos of his actor/object set in the middle of daily city action (Fig. 7).

Snow explains his logic as follows: "The actors in the events-that-become-objects that are

my photographic works are the manipulable variables of photographic image-making.

That cameras are mirrors with memories is the first important understanding. That

'subjects' are transformed to become photographs is the second."[105] As with Wallace's

set-up photos of individuals walking along the sidewalk, Snow's walking woman is not

only a "heroic"[106] symbol, as Wallace describes his subjects, but at the same time a

temporary urban sculpture whose primary role is also that of an aesthetic object –

mediated by art and framed through the photographic medium – in a modernist setting.

As the 1970s moved on, walking and photography continued to combine in a new

surge of documentary, architectural, and poetic photographic works in different parts of

the country. Gabor Szilasi has consistently remained grounded in a formalist application

of photography. His photographs of rural Quebec in the 70s, as well as his "urban

views"[107] and the architectural photos he has been taking in Montreal since 1960, reflect

a distinctive and authoritative concern for the qualities of the medium as a means of

translating his visual interpretation of inhabited landscapes. According to photographic

historian and curator Davis Harris, "Szilasi's earliest photographs of Montreal signal a

preference for making graphically striking images."[108] Szilasi is drawn to form and in this

respect not all urban spaces are equal, especially in contrast with rue Sainte-Catherine,

where he created both black and white and colour bodies of work by photographing with

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[105] Quoted in Leclerc and Dessureault, 146.

[106] Wallace, *My Heroes*, 3.

[107] Harris, 24.

[108] Ibid.

a portable camera or large format equipment, depending on the project. As he

remembers:

> I did photograph with a 35mm camera on Saint-Laurent, but I found that Sainte-Catherine Street, from a photographic point of view, was more interesting. Socially Saint-Laurent offered me more, but I liked to photograph a really commercial street because of its industrial architecture, shop windows, signage.[109]

Szilasi used a large format camera to take a panoramic photograph of a warehouse

along Saint-Laurent (Fig. 8) around the same period that Clara Gutsche was

photographing shop windows in another sector along la Main (Fig. 9). Her frontal black

and white photos represent a direct connection with the history of photography as a

metaphorical reflection of Atget's Paris. The unseen spaces one imagines walking

between the *vitrines* are a fertile expanse for theoretical thought dealing with feminism,

Marxism, and psychoanalysis, in an area where the windows along the sidewalk have

reflected the figure of so many ambulating photographers and artists.

On the West Coast, the shifting urban landscape of Vancouver served as a

dynamic backdrop for Roy Arden's photo projects of the 1980s and 90s. During our

conversation he explained how he sees his walking interventions with his camera into

"territories"[110] in the city as those of a sort of urban archeologist. Downtown places like

Cordova Street are ideal settings for the artist's realist photos that he creates in "zones"[111]

where he sees "a kind of social wildness."[112] While not always pictured, human presence

is implicit in his images, and if a sidewalk is shown bare there is still an aura of, often

recent, human presence. As Shep Steiner observes while discussing photos like *Hastings*

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[109] Gabor Szilasi, interview by author, Montreal, Quebec, February 17, 2012.

[110] Roy Arden, interview by author, South Vancouver, British Columbia, April 5, 2012.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

Street Sidewalk (1995) and *Cordova Street, Vancouver, B.C.* (1995), Arden's images connote a "tension between an optical and a haptic, or tactile, experience of space."[113]

1988 proved to be a year of radical change for street photographers in Quebec. A streetscape taken in Montreal by Gilbert Duclos was contested in court by a person unaware of the photographer's choice to include her in his image – she became aware of the fact when the photo was featured in a local publication. A lengthy legal battle resulted in new provincial legislation that prohibits the publication of photographs without the explicit consent of everyone in them. We now know that this is a question that was already well resolved on moral grounds for certain photographers, such as Szilasi. But beyond any ethical consideration, this law introduced a new reality for photographers canvassing the streets with their camera. Historically this was not novel. As Westerbeck and Meyerowitz remind us, this was a well-known situation for photographers in Victorian England and France a century earlier, and one that greatly contributed to the development of hidden cameras. They write that prohibiting photography in the street and at public beaches "reflected the inhibitions of the Victorian era, which often required street photography to lead a secret life." [114]

The new millennium introduced a new way of viewing the urban landscape. Starting in 2007, Google Street View has allowed Google Map users to access panoramic stitched photos of streets, first in the United States and now throughout the world. Like the nets of deep-sea fishing trawlers, special multi-camera equipped vehicles pass along streets taking photos of the street itself, its sidewalks, buildings, and anything or anyone

[113] Step Steiner, "'The Old Mole': Photography Neighbouring on Materialism," in *Roy Arden: Selected Works 1985-2000* (Oakville: Oakville Galleries, 2002), 28.
[114] "[In] Paris, a ban on street photography was lifted by the prefect of police only in 1890." Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, 96.

else that figures in the range of the digital lens. The result is a virtual representation of city streets that, while charged with practical qualities (access to coordinates and maps), is also a simulacrum. Ambulatory space becomes a line in a setting that is no longer a place, but instead a GPS setting in a globalized corporate space. Privacy issues are instantly treated with automatic filters that blur faces (and, incidentally, other rounded forms, including hubcaps) to "avoid" recognition. To travel up boulevard Saint-Laurent with Google creates an experience for the viewer where the most recent technology and communication tools are skillfully combined to instill the sentiment of a factual and current view. Yet in reality, the data is dated showing places that no longer exist and streets whose names have changed.[115] This virtual medium results in an experience of boulevard Saint-Laurent that is not only aesthetically different, but also antithetical to the artwork I have created for my thesis by walking the same space. Furthermore, each representation of the Main is bound to fundamentally different motivations. For the Google version, it is linked to a bottom line global market economy, while for my own artistic project, it forms a critical association between photography and walking and research and creation. I will describe and further elucidate the nature of my creative project, where both place and space are present, later in the final section of my thesis.

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[115] In the summer 2012, at the time of writing, a Google Street View of the Southeast corner of boulevard Saint-Laurent and rue Sainte-Catherine shows an empty lot. The image of this landmark space in the city dates from 2009. Today a contemporary four-storey building, l*e 2-22* [rue Sainte-Catherine est], inaugurated in 2012, has been built as a dynamic cultural hub and photographic space in the city. http://maps.google.ca/maps?hl=en&client=safari&rls=en& q=google+street+view+2550+st-laurent+map&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.,cf.osb &biw=1174&bih=680&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&ei=PwkDUP_ENMLH6w Gx0onlCA&ved=0CEMQ_AUoAg (accessed, July 15, 2012).

Chapter Two

Place and Space of the Walking Photographer in Canadian Art

The locus of a photograph's genesis, the specific site where the shutter clicked – or, in the case of a manipulated photograph, the suggestion of such a place – tends to be of great importance to us.

> Hilde Van Gelder and Helen Westgeest, *Photography Theory in Historical Perspective* [116]

Defining the difference between the ideas of place and space is complex. Framing these concepts is essential to any serious reading involving the cognitive and the phenomenal setting (whether individually or combined) in relationship to photography and walking. Therefore, it is necessary to explore different theoretical approaches to these terms in order to establish a working model for different understandings of place and space. In other words, creating a methodology to inform my analysis of the sites of photographs where ambulation is present also leads me to define meaningful categories of space in association with photography and walking in Canada. Through this plural approach, my thesis examines place and space dealing with urban, suburban and rural spaces; la Main as place and as space; private and public spaces; the space of the *flâneur*; and heterotopic space.

For the street photographer, place anchors the figurative elements in a photo to a specific geographical setting, while the art photographer or artist working with photography conceives of space as a realm where the objective qualities associated with

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[116] Hilde Van Gelder and Helen Westgeest, *Photography Theory in Historical Perspective* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 112.

place are not necessarily present. But photos can deal with space and place at the same time, or even different spaces within the same setting or place; as Henri Lefebvre observes, space can be "an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next."[117]

Geographers will use the terms of place and space while thinking of the physical properties of locus, a concept present in mapping as well. "Geographers study places,"[118] in the words of Yi-Fu Tuan. The latter part of the twentieth century saw a marked interest in the role of space as a means of disturbing the predominant role of chronology in the humanities. As Barbara Hooper has observed, "From the 1974 publication of Henri Lefebvre's *Production de l'espace* through the publication in 2000 of Anthony Vidler's *Warped Space*, there has been for over three decades a steady production of discourse on space and as steady a declaration of its significance."[119] Historians and anthropologists will often refer to the meaning of place as location, while space can also connote a metaphorical or abstract meaning, while the geographer Edward Soja, whose spatial theory extends on Lefebvre's ideas, theorizes space as a triad involving physical space, mental space, and social/lived space. In discussing a location such as Saint-Laurent, Foucault's concept of space as a place of everyday social activity cannot be overlooked. Robert Nelson's description of Foucault's heterotopias, although addressing another context, has a strong resonance with the various spaces along this street and photographs of them, when he writes: "In effect, churches, theatres, gardens, libraries, museums,

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[117] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 8.

[118] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 3.

[119] Barbara Hooper, "Matter Acts: De-Forming Space," in *Take Place: Photography and Place from Multiple Perspectives,* ed. Helen Westgeest (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2009), 190.

colonies, government buildings, as well as objets d'art, … are the heterotopias that Foucault wishes to privilege – the actual spaces of daily life that are symbolic condensations of other spaces and social relations, as well as concrete entities that can be contrasted with the utopias of historical or nationalistic imagination."[120] On the other hand, Vidler's theoretical articulation of "warped space" includes looking at artistic productions that push the boundaries of particular art forms to create new ways of showing space. Although not created as a model for this theory, *Every Foot of the Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent* can be interpreted as an example of art that Vidler describes as "produced by the forced intersection of different media–film, photography, art, architecture–in a way that breaks the boundaries of genre and the separate arts in response to the need to depict space in a new and unparalleled way."[121]

Boulevard Saint-Laurent is a ritualistic space associated with French-Canadian culture; it is the same space that delineates a historical frontier, marking profound cultural and religious differences within the City of Montreal. Where photography is concerned, this space in most cases figures as a simple backdrop in a picture of loved ones, objects, or scenes of personal interest. Private snapshots – which will mostly never be publicly viewed – probably form the largest body of images of Saint-Laurent Boulevard. In these cases, this street is both represented and presented space; it is, as Mitchell notes in another context, "both a signifier and a signified, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and a commodity inside the package."[122] In other words, it is a space

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[120] Robert S. Nelson, "The Map of Art History," *The Art Bulletin* 79 (March 1997): 40.
[121] Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2001), viii.
[122] W.J.T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5.

where people show themselves while simultaneously performing for the family album photo. In this case it is a point of contact for public and private space.

Saint-Laurent is not a single place, but instead a plurality of spaces that are alive and constantly changing with the rapid growth of the city. The second half of the twentieth century and a new interpretation of photography brought about radical artistic change and a tendency for artists to see this boulevard not only as a historical and social landscape, but also as a site of photographic creation. It is a place where the histories and spaces of la Main and of photography meet, resulting in what Paul Rodaway describes as a "human geography that focuses on the creativity of human beings to shape their world and create meaningful places."[123]

From a social perspective, the construct of the modern city occurs where urban space develops around a concentration of social and economic power. As Tonkiss explains, successive "concentric zones, radial sectors and specialized enclaves"[124] surround the city core. Pressure from urban expansion results in radical changes to the very fabric and social structure of the contemporary city, as blue-collar areas are transformed into gentrified living and business spaces. Since the middle of the twentieth century, this phenomenon has increasingly become part of relentless economic pressure in many Canadian cities. Social documentary photographers have demonstrated an ongoing preoccupation with the social impact of these urban reorganisations; for them, walking these spaces provides immediate contact with subject matter.

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[123] Paul Rodaway, glossary to *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, eds. Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin, and Gill Valentine (London: Sage, 2004), 346.
[124] Tonkiss, 36.

An example of this can be found in Ian MacEachern's (b. 1942) body of work

produced during the mid-1960s, which focussed on the changing face of the northern area

in St-John, New Brunswick. MacEachren's black and white photograph titled *Moore

Street* (c. 1965) exposed a row of Dickensian houses and illustrated how public space in

one of the oldest cities in North America provided no dedicated pedestrian place near

dwellings in working-class parts of the city (Fig. 10). Conversely, this also suggests that

the street was the sidewalk, since most of the area's inhabitants were too poor to own

motor vehicles. A culture that privileged the car made walking an inferior choice for most

travel, even for the shortest distances.

Photographer Claire Beaugrand-Champagne and artist Françoise Sullivan also

created two significant projects related to traveling by foot. In the early 1970s, both were

walking to make their art. Beaugrand-Champagne was a member of the photographic

collaborative GAP. [125] During a four-month period in the summer of 1972 Beaugrand-

Champagne, with Michel Campeau and Roger Charbonneau, documented the people of

the area of Disraeli for the project *Disraeli: Une expérience humaine en photographie*,

which aimed to show a "factual" and "respectful" description of the daily lives of the

inhabitants of the small community.[126] Her photographs for this project were part of the

first large-scale documentary undertaking centred around a rural Quebec community, and

contributed to what Serge Allaire refers to as "a portrait of *Homo quebecensis* and his

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[125] The Groupe d'Action Photographique (GAP), formed in January 1972, in Montreal,
initially consisted of Michel Campeau, Roger Charbonneau, and Serge Laurin; one month
later Claire Beaugrand-Champagne, Pierre Gaudard, and Gabor Szilasi joined the group.
[126] Pierre Dessureault, *Michel Campeau: Les images volubiles: Travaux photographiques,
1971-1996* (Ottawa: Musée Canadien de la Photographie Contemporaine, 1996).

surroundings."[127] The tense political climate in Quebec in the 70s did nothing to diminish the controversy around this project, which was openly challenged for portraying the province as rural at the height of civil tensions around its cultural identity. Here the documentary photograph (the same object that becomes a work of art as soon as it is placed within the walls of the gallery) and its location become a source of primal identity conflict. It also embodies the struggle between craft and art, the village and the metropolis, the past and the present. The largely unintended political agency of Beaugrand-Champagne and GAP's Disraeli photographs results in, to borrow Edward Casey's words, "The place of the work – not to be confused with a workplace [….] – [as] a scene of struggle between two dimensions or levels."[128]

As previously discussed, two years before the Disraeli documentary project and at the heart of the metropolis, Sullivan had undertaken a substantially different work. Set between two places of significance for the artist, her conceptual project consisted of a walk, which she photographed, between the two main museums in Montreal. The first woman artist in the country to carry out such a project, her motivation was fuelled by historic changes occurring within the evolution of art itself. She recounts the motivation behind her decision as follows:

> We had reached a point where it was being said that works in museums were not interesting, were not important, and that in the end even museums should be removed. It made no sense. Today all that has been forgotten, but at the time that point of view was very strong, and many artists I knew were upset, as was I. So, I

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[127] Serge Allaire, "Une tradition documentaire au Québec? Quelle tradition? Quel documentaire ? ["Quebec's Documentary Tradition: What Tradition? What Documentary?"] in *Le Mois de la photo 1993: Aspects de la photographie québécoise et canadienne,* trans. Vox Photo (Montreal: Vox Populi, 1993), http://www.voxphoto.com/ essais/images_docu/documentaire_en.pdf (accessed September 18, 2011).
[128] Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 265.

thought, what do you do? What do you do when you are an artist and your base crumbles? It was in this context that I decided to ask myself what there was outside that was not in the museum [….] So, I decided that I was going to walk from the MBA [Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal].[129]

Photographic spaces dialectically rooted in conceptualism and realism denote multiple spaces. A telling example is seen with Jeff Wall's 1982 staged photograph, *Mimic* (Fig. 11), which depicts a racially charged encounter between an apparently white couple and an Asian man that the couple is overtaking on the sidewalk. The three pedestrians are represented walking along a Vancouver sidewalk in "a mimesis of street photography."[130] The photograph's agency is tied to its semiotic charge, which refers to the gesture in modern art since the 16th century, while also connecting it directly with the genre of street photography.[131] The history of this image tells us that its locus is a Vancouver street and this is Wall's first photograph related to the street photography genre.[132] However, the visual elements that compose this space also denote a place that is not exclusive to Vancouver. For anyone not familiar with the actual physical setting of *Mimic*, this photograph could have been taken in any number of contemporary North American proletarian or suburban city spaces, as the artist avoids any indication of place in the image, leaving out street names, or even the name of a city in the title. Wall orchestrated his image using a place that is more generic than specific, and in doing so all

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[129] Françoise Sullivan, interview and translation by author, Montreal, Quebec, June 21, 2011.

[130] Michael Newman, "Gesture and Time," in *Jeff Wall: Works and Collected Writings* (Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa, 2007), 60.

[131] The transparency in lightbox *Mimic* is a representation of baroque painting and street photography as two "historical modes of representation" concerned with the coded elements in gesture. Ibid., 58.

[132] Jeff Wall, *Catalogue Raisonné 1978-2004*, eds. Heidi Naef and Theodora Vischer (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005), 291-292.

but removed the sense of place on the fringe of the city, while calling semiotic attention to the presence of many spaces in his photo that are linked to art and photographic history with composition and setting, culture with gesture, and urban dialectics with the illustration of a cultural clash on a city sidewalk.

How space and place are viewed depends not only on linguistic criteria, but also on the points of view from which analyses are made. For Tonkiss, these involve "perspectives in social theory to open up different versions of the city [….]"[133] (to which I would add suburbs and rural areas as well).

In the framework of my research, the term space relates most often to a defined linear space through which people walk. Rosemary Donegan's 1984 exhibition, *Spadina Avenue: A Photo History*, and the ensuing book, are composed of photographs collected from disparate sources to show moments in the history of a main commercial artery in the heart of Toronto. These places are united by this avenue's role as a space of peripatetic passage; as Donegan observes, "everyone takes his own walk along Spadina. It's that kind of street."[134] The project includes a band of photos of the sidewalks and facades on both sides of the street that shows the pedestrian space and architecture along the entire length of the avenue (Fig. 12).

Walking and photography in the city generally involve public space that abuts private space. Urban communal space is intricate and offers numerous points of entry through which to gain an understanding of its essential features and their complex interrelations. In Canada, salient historic and cultural factors, as well as the distance

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[133] Tonkiss, 1.
[134] Rosemary Donegan, *Spadina Avenue* (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985), 8.

between many major cities, further complicate our comprehension of different metropolitan centers from a national perspective. After all, this country is a place that is a vast space composed of places dispersed across its sovereign land. The cities with the largest concentration of projects involving photography and walking are Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. These places are separated not only by distance, but also by language and demographics. However, this does not mean that my research is confined to these regions; photographic works that originate from the Atlantic region, such as MacEachern's photos, and from the Canadian Prairies, John Paskievich's (b.1947) photos of a community where a corner store in Winnipeg becomes a vital space in the neighbourhood, also provide distinctive examples of photography and walking.

The cultural conditions that prevailed within the country's institutional framework in the mid-century period did not recognize photography as a legitimate art form. Furthermore, photographs taken while walking in an urban or suburban setting also continue to seek cultural legitimacy. To this day, Canadian space in the national psyche and its link to the visual arts remain significantly associated with wilderness and landscape, rather than with the city. Most of the photographers who figure predominantly in this history of photography and walking during the 1950s arrived in Canada from abroad. While Michel Lambeth is a native-born Canadian, Tata, Gibson, Gaudard, Herzog, and Szilasi were part of the post-war wave of immigrants for whom the country could be imagined as a place of opportunity and prosperity.

When the city is imagined through photographs of its sidewalks, these photographs can take on the character of palimpsests that, regardless of their intended

function, bring to light what Tonkiss calls the "acutely material expression in the physical transformation of urban environments from the middle part of the twentieth century."[135] Boulevard Saint-Laurent is an archetype of this change. The demolition of buildings in Old Montreal in 1912 resulted in this space – given the official status of "Boulevard" in 1905 – becoming one of the first central arteries to cross the island from shore to shore.[136] The Main is known as a place of immigration.[137] By the middle of the twentieth century, Eastern-European Jews, Italian, and Chinese immigrants had well-established communities along various sectors of the Boulevard, principally providing workers to the numerous –mainly clothing– factories in the area. During the 1950s as these groups moved to the suburbs, new waves of immigrants, often from Greece, Portugal, and Hungary, settled in the neighborhood. As Pierre Anctil recounts: "Looking for inexpensive housing and services to newcomers, post-war immigrants naturally gravitated to the Main [….], in a neighborhood that already bore the obvious traces of the ethnic communities that had come before them."[138] In discussing the material features of Canadian cities revealed through the lens of the walking photographer, it is worthwhile to pull back a bit from the specifically urban terrain in order to consider a few significant events that are also important to understanding the national artistic and cultural setting during this period. These historic details framed the cultural context in which photographers – whether established or newly arriving in the country – created their photographs.

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[135] Tonkiss, 17.
[136] Anctil, 24-25.
[137] Ibid, 47.
[138] Ibid., 61.

The idea of the *flâneur* has been closely associated with the image of the street and documentary photographer. The *Flâneur's* mental space is often elusive, yet sharply intuitive, as is the *flâneur's* gaze, while the physical space of walking is organized by a network of sidewalks and streets, made to bring order to the modern city. But correlations between the two stop here, as beyond these similarities are ontological oppositions inherent in the figures of the street photographer and the *flâneur* and the spaces and places associated with each. Although both follow the intricate circuits that intertwine residential and commercial spaces of the modern city, each figure's engagement with space diverges. The *flâneur* or *flâneuse*[139] – and as Akkelies van Nes observes "the *flâneuse* is not a male *flâneur, but she is a version of the flâneur*"[140]– trajectory, while associated with the spirit of leisurely stroll, is also guided by the cognitive setting of a bourgeois status. His or her trajectory is mapped, not so much by the city map as by the terrain of socioeconomic references, which reinforce his or her middle-class position.[141]

At the halfway mark of the twentieth century, photographers who were busy walking the streets of Canadian cities were supposed to be driven more by documentary

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[139] In its original Baudelairean sense, the *flâneur* is a male figure, but the walking woman of the nineteenth century and later is now also part of the picture. See Janet Wolff, "The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity," *Theory, Culture & Society* 2 (1985); Elizabeth Wilson, "The Invisible *flâneur,*" *New Left Review* 191 (January-February 1992), http://0-www.newleftreview.org.mercury.concordia.ca/I/191/elizabeth-wilson-the-invisible-flaneur (accessed September 19, 2011).

[140] Akkelies van Nes, "Gender Differences in the Urban Environment: The *Flâneur* and *Flâneuse* of the 21st Century," in *Proceedings of the 7th International Space Syntax Symposium,* eds. Daniel Koch, Lars Marcus, and Jesper Steen (Stockholm: International Space Syntax Symposium, 2009), http://www.sss7.org/Proceedings/08%20Spatial%20 Configuration%20and%20Social%20Structures/S122_vanNes_Nguyen.pdf (accessed July 21, 2012).

[141] The *flâneur* Walter Benjamin describes is the prototype of this urban walker. See Walter Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in *The Arcades Project*, 416-455.

interests than by a desire to explore exclusively bourgeois spaces and places. However,

the photographic representation of places as different as Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, or

Vancouver was consistently marked by the basic approaches and assumptions of

modernism. Joel Eisinger defines modernism as:

> Distinguished by a concern for the unique and essential qualities of an artistic
> medium, by a conception of art as the expression of an individual whose aim is to
> say something new or profound about subjective experience, universal experience,
> or the nature of artistic form, and by the assumption that the artistic status of a
> work of art and the work's meaning are inherent in the work itself.[142]

These modernist characteristics are keys to understanding the aesthetic foundation of the

way photographers documented the spaces and places of various Canadian rural and

urban communities in the 1950s and after. As Martha Langford points out: "The Western

social documentary tradition, with its humanist philosophy, formalist values, and respect

for photographic craft, has exerted a strong and enduring influence on Canadian

photographic practice."[143] These models are visible in the way photographers represented

the places and spaces where individuals walk, and formative in the way they mentally

engaged with these ambulatory spaces. Szilasi mentions that "after the early '80s, I

stopped doing street photography, in part because I found it a bit exploitive to be

photographing people without their consent."[144] He was questioning the street

photographer's indiscriminate right to photograph individuals in the street, even though

in public space and supported by a well-established historical practice within the genre.

Szilasi's choice, while connoting his humanist convictions, also supports the modernist

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[142] Joel Eisinger, *Trace and Transformation: American Criticism of Photography in the Modernist Period* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 1.
[143] Langford, *"Short History of Photography,"* 287.
[144] Gabor Szilasi, interview by author, Montreal, Quebec, February 17, 2012.

credo of the work of art's attachment to subjective experience, concurrently pointing to the ambivalence of the line between public and private space.

As we have seen, landscape holds a privileged position in the visual arts in Canada; mostly through painting, it has often been a vector simultaneously signifying and representing visual tropes of an immense stretch of land from one ocean to the other. As Langford observes: "unsurprisingly, trends in landscape photography during the latter half of the century are also solid indicators of tendencies in the medium as a whole, traversing modernist and postmodernist practice."[145] Photographs resulting from or related to walking are prevalent in Canadian visual culture and can signify, substantiate, and represent the notion of Canadian space factually as well as in a predominantly abstract setting. The vast span of its borders and terrain, arguably means that the country is, in fact, a place much more in tune with the idea of canoe, train, motor, and air travel than with walking. Whereas, as Thomas Cooper observes, "boundless exploration"[146] is a dominant Canadian idea, foot travel occurs locally in urban spaces and different rural areas across the land. The country as a geographical expanse resists the very idea of walking.

The identity and representation of the country as place was framed within a visual language, with landscape at its core. This concentrated institutional application of what can be seen as landscape propaganda converts this sign into what Lucy Lippard calls a

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[145] Langford, "Short History of Photography," 289.
[146] Thomas W. Cooper, "McLuhan and Innis: The Canadian Theme of Boundless Exploration," *Journal of Communication,* 31, no. 3 (September 1981), http://0-onlinelibrary.wiley.com.mercury.concordia.ca/store/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1981.tb00439.x/asset/j.1460-2466.1981.tb00439.x.pdf?v=1&t=h4x92v3n&s=fc9e9d8bef8c642c4d4dfeb3e6a0bb787794d56e (accessed July 19, 2012).

"hermetic narrative."[147] The emphasis placed upon a space whose natural characteristics

situate it as antithetical to the city places the latter in a peripheral zone, closer to the edge

of Canadian identity than its core. As a result, the Canadian city played a marginal role in

this conceptualization of Canadian space. This condition of tension between a national

and a local production was part of the artistic scene in the country, which in Quebec was

also profoundly influenced by Paul-Émile Bordua's *Refus global*[148] anti-establishment

manifesto. This was a significant aspect of the cultural context that defined Quebec as a

place; a place within a place where landscape is translated into a powerful sign connoting

Western tradition, nationhood, and economic abundance. As Carol Payne explains:

> First and most prominently, pictorial conventions of landscape are adopted to
> promote natural resources and their exploitation by governmentally sanctioned
> industry. Here it is implied that the land's true value is measured in economic
> terms; it has been unleashed and protected only through the industry and
> ingenuity of Euro-Canadians. By extension, land as economic resource becomes a
> sign of national prosperity itself.[149]

The Main is a significant geographic and psychological point of contact between

this country and Quebec. It can be imagined as a long zipper that unites while also

separating two distinctive parts that are part of a whole; the median line in the city, it has

historically been a boundary between French speaking and Anglophone communities in

Montreal at the same time connoting its symbolic reference as a border between Quebec

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[147] Lucy R. Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*
(New York: New Press, 1997), 33.
[148] Published in 1948, this manifesto was a denunciation of religion and of the ruling
class in Quebec; it was signed by young artists and intellectuals, including Françoise
Sullivan.
[149] Carol Payne, "'How Shall We Use These Gifts?' Imaging the Land in the National
Film Board of Canada's Still Photography Division," in *Beyond Wilderness: The Group
of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art*, ed. John O'Brian and Peter White
(Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 153.

on the east side of the street and the rest of the country on the west side. Boulevard Saint-Laurent is historically linked to expansion and industrial growth. But in contrast with Canadian landscape (denoting national values) this space has its real value in its own local social history, not only as economic space but above all as cultural space. This history, as seen through the gaze of Canadian photography, offers a cogent example of distinct histories including the local, that of this boulevard. Incorporating the notion of space into a reading of these histories may shed new light on their meanings. In fact, space can be seen as the point of junction where distinct parts of both histories – national and local – are joined. For the better part of its history, Saint-Laurent's evolution took place in direct relation with a very visible, heterogeneous human presence on its sidewalks. These would constitute "real" space for Henri Lefebvre, defined by its function as a "space of social practice."[150] Gradually, over the last half century, this has changed, as an increasingly fast-paced and efficiency-driven lifestyle encourages quicker alternatives over perambulation. At the same time, the street's attraction as a primary destination is increasingly challenged by other established or emerging places in the city. The fact that Saint-Laurent spans the island as a main artery results from the city's bustling expansion during the twentieth century. Its history involves a dynamic geographical relation to space, since for the better part of its history this street gradually stretched out until reaching the opposite shore of the island. Around 1740, Saint-Lambert Street, which fifty years later would become the island's East-West dividing line when renamed Boulevard Saint-Laurent was, as Anctil describes the footpath, a "dirt track

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[150] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 14.

through the farmland north of the town"[151] that went from the old fortifications near the

port to the parish of La Visitation de Sault-au-Récollet on the Northern side of the

island.[152] Describing this road during the eighteenth century Anctil writes: "For decades

the future Saint-Laurent Boulevard served more as a means of communication across

'desserts' than an inhabited street. [….] it was not a concession road or a route lined with

farming families, but rather a link between the 'côtes' (concessions) [….]"[153] To say that

over the past two centuries the Main has grown into a place of exchange would almost be

a euphemism, for in fact, as Hugh MacLennan has noted: "The Main has been the most

astonishing forcing house in Canada for culture and business."[154] For generations of

Montrealers this street was a place of individual and community inspiration. Over the

decades Saint-Laurent Boulevard has continuously changed, yet for a good portion of the

street, its modernist architecture remains in city blocks of buildings that continue to

survive the pressures of urban growth. Some of these buildings were photographed a

century ago and are seen on various images taken at separate moments in time.

The city block along the Western side of boulevard Saint-Laurent between

boulevard René Lévesque[155] and rue Sainte-Catherine is a space that Melvin Charney,

Bill Vazan, and I have photographed. Charney created his photographic vista in 1965;

Vazan photographed the same space five years later while crossing it; I walked and

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[151] Anctil, 15.

[152] Parks Canada, "Boulevard Saint-Laurent. March 2009," http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/
culture/proj/main/origins1.aspx (accessed July 21, 2012).

[153] Anctil, 15.

[154] Hugh MacLennan, Introduction in *The Main: Portrait of a Neighbourhood*, by
Edward Hillel (Toronto: Key Porter, 1987), under Foreword.

[155] The city changed this boulevard's name from Dorchester to René Lévesque in 1987.

photographed this block several times during the last two years for my thesis project. The photographs we took, all in the snapshot genre, show distinctly different representations of the same place – I use the term 'place' here because of the historical agency of this area. While one of the obvious distinctions between the three series of photos is temporal, differences are also aesthetic, methodological, and of intentionality. Henri Lefebvre is a key scholar of the urban environment and the production of space and its transformation. At this point, I want to consider what these different photos of the same place and space can reveal while considering some of Lefebvre's concepts related to city space.

In his consideration on artists and space, Lefebvre cites Paul Klee when he notes: "artists – painters, sculptors or architects – do not show space they create it."[156] Charney's *The Main* represents a panorama of this city block as recreated photographically through the gaze of an architect and artist. For him, the architecture shown in his photos can be read as a book of knowledge. To study Charney's panorama from Lefebvre's angle of view also means that the architectural elements in the photos connect to "architectural discourse that [….] too often imitates or caricatures the discourse of power, and that it suffers from the delusion that 'objective' knowledge of 'reality' can be obtained by means of graphic representations."[157] Put another way, for Lefebvre this row of buildings denotes profit driven hegemony and formal construction influenced by capitalism[158] over the creation of spaces concerned with social relationships. What figures in the forefront of this collage of photos is equally of significant importance for Lefebvre. The street Charney photographed is busy with traffic

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[156] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 124.
[157] Ibid., 361.
[158] Ibid., 9.

and people. Lefebvre's view of the street is binary. On one hand, it is "a meeting place (topos)"[159] that is also where revolutionary events can happen.[160] Conversely, its role as a meeting place is superficial; it is a place where people do not interact that has "become a network organized for and by consumption.[161] In this mindset, Charney's photographs of this metropolitan corridor show theatres, bars, restaurants, stores, a department store, and proletarian housing. These are spaces that are not sources of enlightenment, as the dictionary Charney imagines, but spaces attached to "forced labor, programmed leisure, and habitation as a place of consumption."[162]

Vazan snapped two photos of this city block during his walk up Saint-Laurent for *Walking into the Vanishing Point*. His methodology involved taking a picture at each street intersection as he traced his virtual line along the Western sidewalk. The first photo showing this block was taken from across the street on the southern side of Dorchester Boulevard, before he reached the Dorchester/Saint-Laurent block. The second picture, which is the only photo he took while actually on this section's sidewalk, is from the North corner of the block looking ahead up the street. The sidewalk on the Western side of the street is the conceptual line the artist followed up the Main. Vazan's photos show his physical passage along this street to create an imaginary line. The spaces he is showing in his photos can be thought of as geographic settings on a map. However, this is also a space that he has "reappropriated" as a space of creation with his own physical presence for which his photos are a visual trace. For Lefebvre, the "reappropriation of

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[159] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2003), 18.
[160] Ibid., 19.
[161] Ibid., 20.
[162] Ibid.

space [is] of great significance, for [it teaches] us much about the production of spaces."[163] The importance he assigns appropriation in relation to art intersects with his notion of representational spaces. These are junctions "embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of life, as also to art."[164] Vazan's two snapshots along this block are not only representations of places; they are photos of representational spaces because they foremost link to a concept that is "qualitative, fluid and dynamic,[165] or in other words fundamentally critical and original.

My own project, *Every Foot of the Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent,* shows the street and sidewalk along this stretch of the boulevard only when there is no visible human presence in the picture frame. To this effect, I walked and photographed this space six times over a two-year period. I conceptualized this series of photos as a combination of walking and photography to train a new gaze on a central corridor in the city. Lefebvre describes urban space as political, not as a work of art.[166] When the street and sidewalk are empty, these spaces cease to function as *topos.* The absence of people leaves architecture, signage, and material artefacts – the material signs of politics – in the foreground. *Every Foot of the Sidewalk* shows these elements changing; the absence of people or traffic reveals a place undergoing profound metamorphosis. A Lefebvrian analysis heightens the significance of the changing topographic elements revealed through the photos of this city block made across time. It shows us a dominated space – meaning for Lefebvre, "transformed –and mediated– by technology, by practice– in the

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[163] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 167.
[164] Ibid., 33.
[165] Idib., 42.
[166] Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 180.

midst of hegemonic transformation into a place dedicated to a seminal "social practice of capitalism,"[167] that is spectacle.

The post World War II period marked the introduction of new perspectives in the interpretation and analysis of space. In fact, the space in a picture frame may be used as an elementary example in imagining a fundamental difference separating modernism and postmodernism. For the former, what matters lies within the space of the frame, while the latter sees what is important as existing beyond the edges. Yet these concepts are not fixed, and the very idea of modernism itself as a clearly defined metaphysical conception is certainly not unproblematic, for, as Tim Cresswell reminds us, "it has ambiguities and tensions within it."[168] The works discussed in my thesis cannot be readily attributed to one movement or the other based solely on chronology. The arrival of the seventies did not mean the disappearance of modern influences; several Canadian photographers who walk for their photos are motivated by modernist concerns and produce images conforming to modernist aesthetics. They are influenced by modernism as well as postmodernism, and can sometimes be seen to combine elements from both.

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[167] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 125.
[168] Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 16.

Conclusion

Every Foot of the Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent (2010-2012) – Creation and Critical

Research on Walking and Photography in Canada

> *The artist's purpose is precisely to bring "new" perception and altered*
> *perspective to "old" subjects.*
>
> Thomas W. Cooper, *The Living McLuhan*[169]

My interest in the sequential photography of walks as an art form developed as a

result of a walk I took around the perimeter of the island of Montreal in 2004. The

purpose of this walk was to photograph the entire other side of the street along the 144

km tour. Since then, I have taken this approach to projects in Montreal, Herouxville, and

New York. However, *Every Foot of the Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent*, the creative

work done for this thesis, represents the first time I have followed the rule of

photographing only when there is no human presence in the frame.

On October 3, 2010, I took my first walk to photograph *Every Foot of the*

Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent. The snapshots made since then span two years

(2010-2012) of solitary walking. I returned repeatedly to the sidewalk of each block

along this street until I had photographed its complete length without anyone in the frame.

The idea of excluding human presence from my photographic project came to me

after reading Rebecca Solnit.[170] In *Wanderlust*, Solnit reflects on Michel de Certeau's

theory of space and observes "that if the city is a language spoken by walkers, then a post

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[169] Cooper, 154.
[170] Solnit, "Ruins of Hope."

pedestrian city not only has fallen silent but risks becoming a dead language […], even if its formal grammar survives."[171] Boulevard Saint-Laurent is where I live and work. I tried to imagine what this busy space in my own city would look like if it were abandoned. What would the sidewalks of my street reveal if photographically described as pure presence, devoid of human beings? Boulevard Saint-Laurent is a major corridor in Montreal, charged with history, culture, and the aura of generations of people for whom it represented a destination, and where many of those generations have also walked. It is a space made from profuse places, an imaginary line that divides some, and unites others.

Photographs in my work are distinct from the traditional "street photography" genre and its *moment décisif* tropes; I have endeavoured to strip away the human element, which makes up the most reliable and distracting feature of street photography, sometimes even the photographer who is fortuitously present in reflective surfaces. Excluding all this results in a reading of the space that is unusual and contrary to its historical connotation as a lively living and working place. *Every Foot of the Sidewalk* is designed to show 'The Main,' this iconic urban space, devoid of its *flâneurs* and residents. Yet this is not entirely an imagined or mediated view. Walking throughout the city, the pedestrian comes upon public spaces that have ceased to perform their primary function because they are empty. I have stalked the populated blocks, testing their resistance to this emptiness, awaiting my chance. As a result, each walk produced photos that become a temporal and visual trace, and added a new layer in our visual relation to this space, possibly a projection of future disuse or obsolescence.

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[171] Solnit, *Wanderlust,* 213.

Every Foot of the Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent is a synchronous work consisting of two distinctive media set in dialogue and composed in three parts. The first two parts are photographic, made up of small-format colour prints. The scale of these prints (15 x 7.5 cm) is intended to draw the viewer into the photograph, encouraging close inspection, and is also dictated by the sheer number of prints in the work as a whole. This printed component of my work is composed of 15 x 7.5 cm colour enlargements. The first part represents a selection of images, which compose a complete view of sidewalks of each city block (Fig. 13); the number of images/block varies according to its length. The second photographic part is a mosaic of prints showing the block along the west side between boulevard René Lévesque and rue Sainte-Catherine. In this part, the unbroken top line shows the entire space – it is therefore similar in structure to the first part. But below this register, descending in vertical lines, are images representing all the walks I made to photograph the same piece of sidewalk; empty spaces along each row represent spaces that refused to empty out, seeming to resist photographic depopulation (Fig. 14). These vertical lines form a multi-layered, temporal, photographic record of my visual research of the sidewalk as a springboard for creation. The third part, which is intended to be shown concurrently, is a large-scale single screen video projection (250 x 125 cm, duration 174 minutes) of snapshots sequenced to construct a geographically rational representation of all the sidewalk space along boulevard Saint-Laurent, starting and ending at my front door. The 2679 photos will change at a rate matched to my walking pace.

The vertical photographs (portrait mode), all taken from the opposite side of the street, depict the street, sidewalk, and architecture or open space (such as a park or empty

lot bordering the sidewalk). They have been taken and edited with the idea of showing the entire walking space along each block and its environment in a consistent way. When placed side by side, they form a systematic frontal representation of all the city blocks along Saint-Laurent. The sequence, while conforming to the urban layout, is made up of photographs that are not displayed in the chronological order in which they were taken. This deconstruction of the seasonal narrative has no aesthetic premise and is guided by necessity and chance. In a philosophical sense, the notion of city space as palimpsest is activated, as the architecture present throughout the work is often fragmentary within any given frame, and can change when the same building appears in more than one photo (a portion of a building or space that appears on the right edge of a photo can sometimes also be seen on the left edge of the following photo, although the two pictures may have been taken several months or a year apart). Over the course of this project, I started to ask myself whether these overlapping areas, these crossings of two places between and across the individual photos, could not be thought of as a particular kind of space, as Lefebvre defines 'space' as a meeting space. In this case, however, it would represent a meeting space of materiality, for in an image devoid of human presence, it is the materiality of the street that signifies. Architecture and vernacular details become the guiding elements for both my walk and the transition from one photo to the next. Any of these elements, when framed within the lateral part of the photo, form a bridge to the next space. In this sense, the elements that are part of the flow of the experience mark the boundaries of individual photographs and also lock them together. They lead me forward, becoming active agents in the narrative unfolding of the visual composition of my walk (see Appendix 2).

My project of photographing the entire length of Saint-Laurent represents the first time all the walking space along "the Main" has been depicted in an artwork and proposes a new way to consider the modern city street. It disarticulates the temporal part of the walk, thereby revealing the passage of time. Ontologically different, it provides links to photographic works involving and connoting ambulation in a historical framework.

As already noted, a variety of conceptual works involving serial photographs taken along predetermined urban spaces have been created in Canada since the 1960s. Melvin Charney's *The Main* (1965), Bill Vazan's *Walking into the Vanishing Point* (1970), and Stan Douglas's *Every Building on 100 West Hastings* (2001) are distinguished examples. In Charney's and Vazan' projects, the taking of each photograph seems to have been guided by a preset logic and formal structure that does not interrupt the artist's ambulation across the pre-delimited city space. For his part, Douglas constructed a digitally stitched, composite photograph of a historic Vancouver city block creating a meticulously composed, topographical view of the space. My own work enters into dialogue with these earlier works, and complicates the discourse with the experience of walking and the role it plays in the creative process. My snapshots emphasize the condition of walking this engineered ribbon intended for human circulation, watching its transformation, and providing a point of entry for a multi-layered analysis. This strategy however involves returning to the same spaces and walking across them repeatedly over time, not as the poet looking for visual tropes, but as the walker whose repeated walks along the same space leave their own trace on the ground. This trace in turn becomes a

new dimension in the history of that space that denotes its photographic representation as archaeological data.

Since the last decade of the twentieth century, street photography has gradually become less prevalent. Photographers have begun spending more time exploring the new possibilities of digital photographic software. We see this with Douglas's piece. Also, by 2009, continuous images of the walking space in many Canadian cities were accessible to anyone with an Internet connection. I have considered the example of *Google Street View*, which claims that viewers can "explore the world at street view"[172] through panoramic images taken from cars specially equipped with high-definition cameras. These digital photos, showing any specific street location requested by the user, instantaneously appear on the computer screen.[173] Therefore, the contemporary street photographer no longer needs a physical engagement with street space. In a development worthy of Orwell's imagination, street space is no longer a locus in the city, but the space where the photographer has a computer, meaning anywhere.

During my walks to take these photos, I became increasingly conscious of the archival component of my project. While this artwork is not intended as an archive, this element cannot be separated from *Every Foot of the Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent*, any less than walking can. This component in the work brings to mind a passage from Walter Benjamin where he reflects:

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[172] Google Street View, http://maps.google.ca/help/maps/streetview/ (accessed August 15, 2011).

[173] Numerous complaints involving privacy laws have resulted in Google's application of sophisticated digital filters to automatically blur the faces of the unsuspecting figures appearing in the photo.

> I, however, had something else in mind: not to retain the new but to renew the old. And to renew the old – in such a way that myself, the newcomer, would make what was old my own – was the task of the collection that filled my drawer.[174]

The photos of my street that make up this project have become a collection that now fills my "drawer." They show a place where the new and the old combine in a seemingly endless choreography of architecture and objects that slowly unfold, one after another, through the prism of photography and walking. Each photo has a "reference" along its vertical borders that is my guide in the sequential composition of the images. Part of a street sign, a fire hydrant, or a tree, along the right side of the frame in one photo will be found along the left side of the next photo. These bits of color, forms, ready-mades, or natural elements, are formal connectors. They are sometimes obvious but often discreet, material as well as organic, and assure the geographical succession of the whole sidewalk space in my series. Seamless continuity of the spaces in the scenography of the work is deliberately avoided, so that the mental stitching that these photos trigger remains in the mind of the viewer. In a Benjaminian sense, these connectors can also represent the start of an index of the eclectic materiality of this urban corridor.[175] My walk and photos acquire a fresh layer that points to the urban archaeology that binds the project.

The archaeological potential of street photographs is one of the subjects that Roy Arden brought to light during our conversation, which was undertaken as part of my research. As he acknowledged "the archaeologist" in him is a primary part of his creative motivation.[176] The interviews conducted with photographers and artists for this thesis (included here as an appendix) have provided salient and distinctive perspectives on the

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[174] Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Signs*, ed. Ursula Marx, et al., trans. Esther Leslie (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 7.
[175] See Appendix 2.
[176] Roy Arden, interview by author, South Vancouver, British Columbia, April 5, 2012

application of photography and walking in Canadian art over the last fifty years. These

conversations reveal how walking can lead to spaces and places of formal aesthetic

inspiration. It can also be visualized, and thereby tied to a space or place that is associated

with a creative conceptual strategy inherent in the execution of an idea. Serge Clément

explains the intricate and poetic nature of walking through the city to take photos.

Christos Dikeakos shares memories of walking and photography, and its evolution in

Vancouver, bringing to light an important historical aspect of the association between the

two spheres that has consistently influenced his own artistic production. Françoise

Sullivan reveals that her idea to photograph a walk is inseparable from memory and

politics. Gabor Szilasi evokes the importance of walking in his work, and underlines that

photography is not simply about looking, but also it is about seeing. Bill Vazan relates

how his artistic use of photography and walking can be combined to create conceptual

sculptural form.

Looking at the numerous advances that have combined photography and walking

in Canadian photography and art, evokes an observation by Jerry Zaslove:

> Thus photography and 'judgement' in the Kantian sense bring practical reason
> into the pivot point where we question the imaginary representation of reality.
> The boundaries between reality and imagination are put into a 'translatable' mode
> of existence. Photographing streets, then, tests the limits and boundaries of the
> city by revealing the destructive potential interior to all genuine works of art
> whose epistemic turn toward judgement implicates the society that exists outside
> and inside of the exchange principal that underscores modernity. We live inside
> and outside the city and we live inside and outside the terror of the beauty of the
> photograph.[177]

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[177] Jerry Zaslove, "Geological Poetics and Cultural Memory – Vancouver's 'One Way'
Elegiac Streets," in *Unfinished Business: Photographing Vancouver Streets 1955 to 1985*
(Burnaby and North Vancouver: West Coast Line and Presentation House Gallery, 2005),
251.

Hence, walking becomes a source for the photos, acting as not only as a point of access to a geographical itinerary, along which images are fixed through the camera, but also as a spatiotemporal canvas upon which a photographer or an artist creates. Its space is defined as being one of psychological availability, as much as it is defined by its actual physical setting.

I conducted my research in parallel with the creation of *Every Foot of the Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent*. While the written and creative elements are complementary, they also function independently. Photography and walking combine as a seedbed for ideas and creation. Through the research component of my thesis, I acknowledge the special relationship between these two elements in the history of Canadian art since 1950. By considering the photograph –the object of mechanical reproduction itself – as well as the urban landscape and culture, my thesis provides an analysis of the common creative and intellectual threads underlying works that combine photography and city walking in Canadian art over the last sixty years. I have examined the historic origin of these influences, and considered some of the motivations for significant players in the history of Canadian photography who have combined photography and walking in the city space.

This research shows that there exist several points of entry to analyzing the relationship between photography and walking. Works by photographers and artists created over the past half century as well as recent applications introduced by corporate entities are critical and unique examples. My argument has examined some of these. There are many more, thus exposing an area that is virtually untouched in the history of Canadian art and photography and needs much more research and serious study.

Connecting my own research alongside the making of an artwork motivated by walking and photography communicates the ongoing agency of this combination for inspiring original photographic art in a contemporary urban environment. In this case, boulevard Saint-Laurent, a historic corridor where I have taken photographs to walk the viewer along the street while revealing the changing materiality of its space over a two year period.

Figure 1   Raymonde April. *Îlot, 1984*

Figure 2   Google Street View. Boulevard Saint-Laurent and Ste-Catherine Street, 2009 (accessed 2012)

Figure 3   Jean-Paul Gill. *Faubourg St-Laurent*, 1957

Figure 4   Melvin Charney. *The Main…* 1965

Figure 5   Françoise Sullivan. *Walk from the Musée d'art contemporain to the Musée des beaux-arts and back*, 1970

Figure 6   Bill Vazan. *Walking into the vanishing Point…*, 1970

Figure 7   Michael Snow. *Walking Woman*, 1961-1967

Figure 8   Gabor Szilasi. *Intersection of St- Lawrence Boulevard and Van Horne Avenue, Montreal,* 1980

Figure 9   Clara Gutsche. *5157 boul., St-Laurent, avril 1978 April*, 1978

Figure 10   Ian MacEachern. *Moore Street*, c.1965

Figure 11   Jeff Wall. *Mimic*, 1982

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Figure 12   Rosemary Donegan. *Spadina Avenue*, 1985

Figure 13   Philippe Guillaume. *Every Foot of the Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent* (detail), 2010-2012
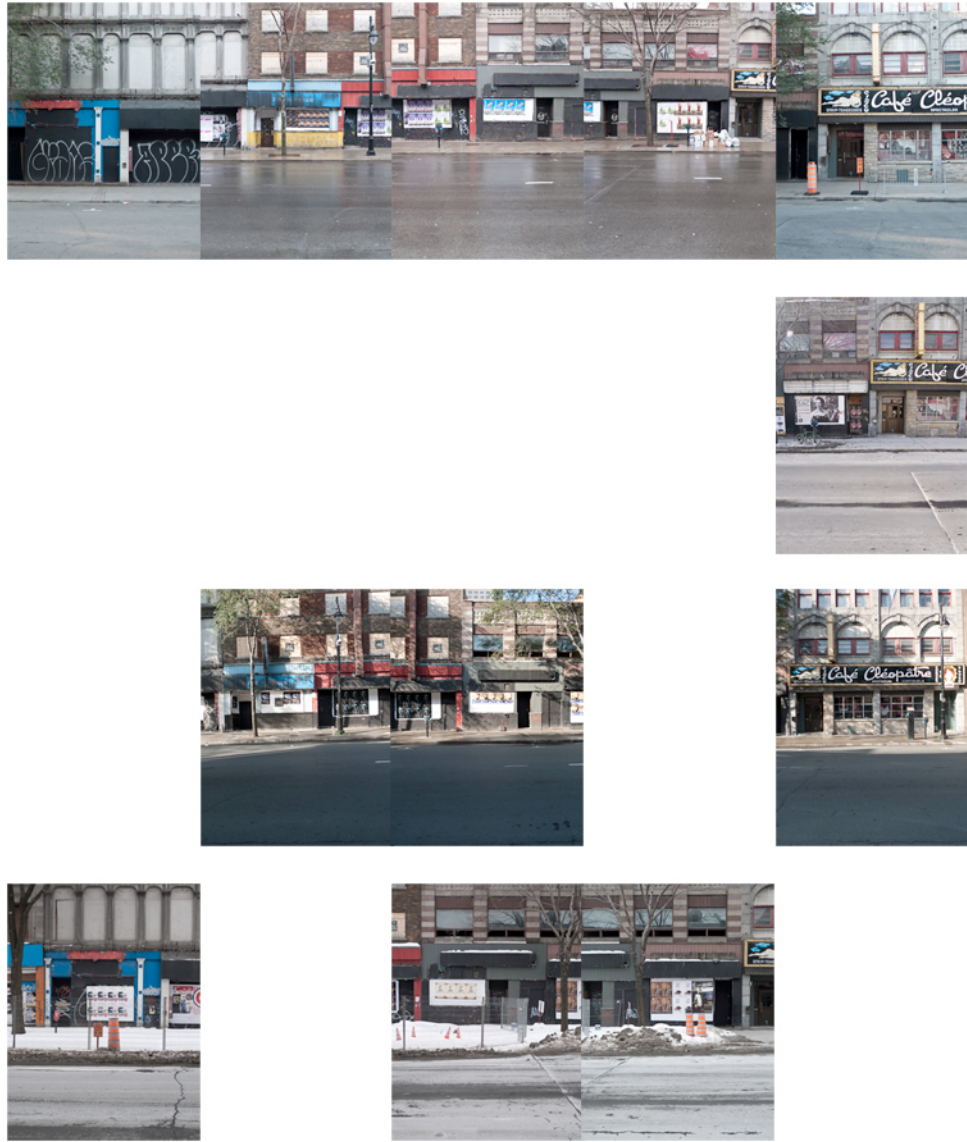
81

Figure 14   Philippe Guillaume. "Resistance Space" from *Every Foot of the Sidewalk: boulevard Saint-Laurent* (detail), 2010-2012

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Artist and Photographer Interviews

ROY ARDEN INTERVIEW, South Vancouver, British Columbia, 5 April 2012.

PG: Can you discuss the relationship between photography, walking, and public space in your work?

RA: I was always an explorer ever since I was very young. I grew up down by the Fraser River at a time when it was still very industrial and rural; there was farming right across from my house. My childhood was very much about walking in industrial areas and areas in transition, through a kind of urban nature. Vacant lots, which were really little forests, figured very large. This was the suburbs then, now it's considered the city. So, when I discovered photography, it became another way of focussing on that exploring. I remember, even in my early twenties, our idea of fun was to go exploring. Now it's a big thing; they call it urban archaeology. Then we would sneak into these grain silos in the port, these really spooky places, like a tunnel that goes below Vancouver.

PG: There is an element of chance in these kinds of urban wanderings.

RA: Yes, there is an element of risk. Those places are magnets for all kinds of people: disenfranchised people, prostitutes, drug addicts, and just kids. They are unofficial places. They are not part of the mainstream, and that's probably part of their attraction when you're a young person. They have a quality of wildness.

PG: Are they spaces or places for you?

RA: Whatever. They're territories, or whatever you want to call them. They embody wildness in every sense of the word. A kind of social wildness, and also a literal, natural wildness happen in those zones.

But I think that my earlier work, *Fragments,* isn't really about that kind of wildness. It's more about the urban. With *Fragments*, I was influenced by Wols[178], the French photographer and painter, also very much by the early photographs of Rauschenberg, his two and a quarter [negative format] photographs, and later by Atget. I always studied photographic history, so from the beginning I had pretty broad references for my work. But *Fragments* was really about urban texture. I was exploring tropes like the *vitrine*, which is one of the most significant tropes of early photography. *Fragments* was kind of my own little art school, that I created for myself, where I was trying to make work as good as work that I was really interested in, but for my own place, my own time, and to make it new. The work is quite biographical, it's basically portraits and urban studies, and the portraits are figure studies with people around me from my milieu. The urban aspect is mostly just texture and *vitrines* and the odd exterior building.

PG: Your urban landscapes are often void of human presence.

RA: Yes.

PG: How does walking fit into your work?

RA: People used to say that my work involves the figure of the *flâneur*, but it really doesn't. The *flâneur* is intensely social; he's observing the social circus of the street. I was always interested in all of that, but I was too shy to photograph it. Mostly, it was because I felt I just couldn't take pictures of people without their permission. So when I did pictures of people, they were portraits. When I did pictures outside, they were unpopulated. I wasn't the type to just snap pictures of people surreptitiously. So, I think

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[178] Alfred Otto Wolfgang Schulze (1913-1951), whose pseudonym was Wols, was a German painter and photographer; his known photographic work was done while he lived in France between 1932 and 1942.

Fragments is a very poetical work. It's very personal. It's not about the social or any

social reality. It has more to do with a picture of the metaphysical, or something like it. It

also has a quality influenced by *Neue Sachlichkeit*, new objectivity, and Otto Dix, more

than anything to do with documentary photography. I always liked painting a lot, and

sculpture, rather than photography as a pure form. Yeah, it uses the city, but not in a

documentary way; it's slightly realist, but it's mostly romantic. In my later photography I

really switched the model and it became more historical, social, economic, even, although

there are not a lot of people in that work. It's really more Marxist than romantic, and

there is a bit of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in that, too, but most of it follows the rules laid down

by Walker Evans, Atget, and straight photography. Actually, I don't think it's straight

photography; instead, it's realist photography.

PG: So there is no effort to bring in the idea of the social landscape?

RA: There is in the later work. There are basically two bodies of work: *Fragments* and

the later photography. Let's call it the '90s photography. Some people have called this

quality of the later work the landscape of the economy, though that's not my title. I hate

that you always have to have titles. I think I was trying to articulate a realist photography,

as opposed to a documentary one; I believe this is what Walker Evans was trying to do,

too. I think that even Fred Herzog is more of a realist than a documentarian most of the

time.

PG: What are your strategies when you plan these walks?

RA: *Fragments* was all walking. Walking at night and walking during the day.

Fragments was all slides. The real reason was because I was so poor, and it was the

cheapest way to shoot colour and see it. A lot of the stuff I shot in the city got lost; I

foolishly edited it out when I was young. I went through different periods of editing that work that in retrospect weren't productive, when I threw away a lot of pictures that were probably more interesting than what survived. At one point I almost threw the whole box of slides away. Nobody was interested in them then; I couldn't give them away, which is funny, because now I can almost pay my rent with them on a regular basis. I started *Fragments* in '81 and it continued to '85. The '90s work was actually mostly done while driving. Some was done while walking but a lot of it was driving.

RA: What were we talking about?

PG: Walking

RA: Walking is very important. It's very important to me in general, especially because I'm not doing enough of it lately. I think it's fairly fundamental. It must go back to a genetic or hard-wired impulse toward searching or foraging. I have that drive. The archaeologist in me is very strong: scavenger, searcher, and gatherer. And it's still that way; it's even important in the work I'm doing now. I never staged things much, except in the portraits.

PG: Could you imagine doing your photographic work without walking?

RA: No. The walking is probably more important than the pictures, really. It certainly was to me in my life. You know, aside from just the particular concern of making art, in my life walking is more important than taking the pictures. It's essential to be peripatetic, to wander through the landscape, the city. It's seeing. I think it's also important because of the state of mind you're in when you're moving. The old image of the peripatetic philosophers is accurate. It's true, walking is the best thing for thinking. Maybe not for inspiration, but for reasoning.

PG: You wrote a piece for *Afterall* magazine on Helen Levitt's film, *In the Street*. Did that work have any influence on your photographic work in public spaces?

RA: It's a beautiful film; it's incredible. But it's just not my style to photograph people. I have done the odd pictures of people in the street, but I'm just not that type. I really don't want to confront people in the public realm. I'm too shy and it just feels wrong to me. I don't think it's wrong when other people do it, but it feels wrong when I do it. I have a friend, Greg Girard, who's done it every day of his life for thirty or forty years, and I think it's great that that's his approach. But it's easy for him; it's not easy for me. I probably would have liked to do more work of that type, but it just wasn't my personality to do that.

But if you look at that stuff from the '90s, like *Landfill,* or *Pulp Mill Dump, Tree Stump*, and things like that, or *Wal-Mart Store (Tide)*, that Wal-Mart picture, what really drew me to Walker Evans and Atget in the beginning was that care and dispassionate gaze at inanimate things that somehow makes those things speak. That's what I was interested in more than the social circus or circus of the street. It's mostly about slowing down attention and this dispassionate gaze. I was trying to figure out what that was all about through imitating those predecessors, but then also bringing my own elements to it, like color. I brought my own filter, because I have my own influences from painting, sculpture, photography, and cinema.

PG: What influence did artists like Jeff Wall, Ian Wallace, or other Vancouver artists have on your photographic work?

RA: There wasn't really any straight photography paradigm here for me when I started. I was certainly well aware of Jeff's work. Herzog wasn't known at all. He came and gave a

talk in my class in the late seventies, then he had his show at the Nova Gallery. So I met him around then, but we didn't become friends until quite a few years later. And Ian I knew, of course, because he was a teacher of mine. So I knew what they were doing with staged photography. But *Fragments* was very much about going back to a thirties model of photography. I was obsessed with Wols at the time. Not just his photography, but his painting. He was the artist who interested me the most. But I really loved Rauschenberg's early square format Rolleiflex pictures. Many people don't know that he really started out as a photographer before he got serious about painting. He had a project to photograph each square inch of America, which he never completed, obviously.

PG: What about Herzog?

RA: No one knew his work until recently. He kept on showing everyone the same group of roughly 30 photos for years, while saying that he had thousands of others. Christos [Dikeakos] was pushing for the idea of a show of his work. It was finally Grant Arnold who managed to see the other photos, and then a dealer from Equinox got involved. You had to pull the pictures out of him; it was like pulling teeth. So, Fred's a great photographer, but maybe he wasn't a great editor of his own work. It wasn't until the VAG show that we saw what he was really all about. Because his work was never accessible before, he never really influenced anybody. Now he will. But I wish I had seen his photographs earlier. I wish I had seen them in the seventies because I think that would have really influenced me, and inspired me, and helped me. It's a shame that I didn't see them earlier.

PG: So, in the seventies, you had Herzog, who wasn't showing many of his photos, and then there was this group called the photo-conceptualists.

RA: I hate that phrase; it doesn't really mean anything. Ian invented it. In fact if you Google it, all references to it lead back to Ian. I've used the term myself, which I regret, because it doesn't even make any sense. If you have photo-conceptualism, then you should have painting-conceptualism and drawing-conceptualism. If you want to be accurate, what it refers to is post-conceptual photo art. I think that's what it really means. It's just photo art in the post-conceptual period, which is not photography. Instead it's art that uses photography. That's an important distinction because photography and photo art are not working out of the same photographic traditions.

At the time, no, those guys didn't influence my work that much and they didn't influence *Fragments* at all. Ian did definitely influence the archival work I did in the eighties. The artist who influenced me in relation to walking is Greg Girard. I met him in '82 or '83. I even think that I literally bumped into Greg while walking. I was walking on Pender and I just stopped him and talked to him because he was wearing clear American Optical DeSoto glasses, which was what I also wore then, like Warhol; they were called welfare glasses then. He had short hair and he was wearing those glasses; at that point – people were still hippies then – it made you kind of a freak, so we recognized each other and I just approached him. That happened a lot in those days. That was when your costume meant so much more than it does today. You would have to talk to someone just because of their appearance; you'd realise you were part of the same very small tribe. I knew right away he was a photographer, just because of how he looked. And then we became friends and we would walk around and take pictures. That was the *Fragments* period, and then he finally just took off for Asia. I don't know of any other photographer who's walked and photographed as much as he did.

SERGE CLEMENT INTERVIEW, Montreal, Quebec, 28 October 2011.

PG: We are meeting at 4060 Saint-Laurent, a seminal place, or hub, if you like, for documentary photographers in Montreal. Mais pour commencer, je vais te demander ce qui distingue l'association entre la photographie et la marche dans ton travail?

SC : Dans un premier temps, j'aimerais approcher la question de façon plus globale en

considérant l'ensemble de mes projets. Dans mon travail, s'il n'y avait pas eu de marche,

il n'y aurait pas eu de projets photographiques. Je suis quelqu'un qui a besoin de voir les

choses, de les sentir et de les rencontrer physiquement pour être capable de les approcher

et de les photographier. C'est dans l'exercice physique de la marche qu'il y à la fois une

concentration et un abandon au processus photographique, à la conception d'image

photographique, où je laisse les images photographiques se développer dans ma tête, dans

l'interprétation des lumières que je rencontre. Je pense à un des premiers projets

photographiques que j'ai fait à Montréal qui s'appelle *Affichage et automobile* [1975-77],

où je regardais le phénomène publicitaire et l'emplacement des affiches publicitaires.

J'analysais où étaient les affiches en fonction des trajets qui appartenaient aux axes

principaux des automobilistes. Les affiches sont rarement localisées pour être vus par les

piétons, qui les voient, oui, mais elles sont avant tout localisées pour que les

automobilistes les rencontrent. Pour ce travail-là, même si une partie impliquait

l'automobile, j'ai fait toute la partie du centre ville à pied. Toute la partie autour du nord

de la ville combinait la marche et le transport automobile.

PG : Tu montres des automobiles dans certaines photos, mais jamais du point de vu du véhicule. Mais quoi qu'il en soit, en regardant ton travail dans son ensemble, c'est vraiment l'élément ambulatoire qui nous marque en termes de mobilité.

SC : Depuis 35 à 40 ans, je photographie principalement dans des milieux urbains et principalement en marchant; je me sers assez peu d'une auto. Avec le temps, ma pratique m'a emmené à une autre façon d'aborder la marche, de déambuler dans les villes. En repensant à *Affichage et automobile,* j'ai compris plusieurs années après que beaucoup de ces images étaient préconçues; je connaissais les lieux, et pour ça je les approchais moins dans l'expérience de faire des photos instantanées. J'avais une formation avec le 4x5, donc de placer la camera à un endroit qui devrait être le bon endroit fait qu'après ça, il n'y a plus beaucoup de mobilité. J'ai commencé la photo comme ça, et dans ce travail en particulier, même si c'était en 35mm et sans trépied, il y avait quelque chose de cette idée que, "je fais la photo comme ça et c'est le bon endroit." C'est dans une tradition classique. Je pense à Walker Evans, à Paul Strand. Alors j'ai traîné pendant plusieurs années cet esprit du 4x5. Le premier projet qui marque une brisure avec cette attitude-là, et qui est plus dans l'intuition, où j'accepte tout ce qui entre dans l'image à une vitesse sur laquelle je n'ai aucun contrôle, c'est le travail entre 1980 et '84, qui s'appelle *Notes urbaines*.

PG : Et là je pense à cette photo que tu as prise pas loin d'ici, au coin de la rue Rachel. Ce qui évoque la question suivante: quand tu sors pour faire des photos, est-ce que tu fais des photos et tu marches, où est-ce que tu marches et tu fais des photos?

SC : Je dirais que je photographie un peux différemment en fonction d'où je suis. Au Québec je connais très bien les villes, donc la dérive… Souvent je photographie sans qu'il y ait un projet en cours; il y en a un, mais sans la proximité d'une date pour servir en butoir. C'est plutôt photographier dans un besoin de regarder la ville, de découvrir; alors je ne sais pas si je photographie pour pouvoir marcher où si je marche pour pouvoir photographier. Je pense que c'est les deux. Quand j'ai relu *Notes urbaines*, j'ai réalisé que j'étais dans la même expérience que quand j'étais adolescent et je venais à Montréal

de Valleyfield les fins de semaine pour voir un film. Je me souviens que j'adorais marcher dans les rues comme la rue Ste-Catherine et faire les rencontres furtives des individus de la ville. Il y a l'individu dans la ville avec l'idée de la solitude, mais il y a aussi des groupes qui se déplacent dans la ville. Mais ma position est d'un point de vu solitaire. Quand je marche, je fais des circuits dans une ville, et c'est plutôt que je suis seul. J'ai plus de difficulté à photographier lorsque quelqu'un m'accompagne, car je veux être entier à l'expérience photographique. Si je marche pendant cinq, six, ou huit heures dans une ville, je peux m'arrêter de temps en temps. Je lis sur un banc, je repars et marche pendant quelques heures, je m'arrête dans un café pour écrire. Il y a toute une expérience, mais qui est aussi une expérience de solitude qui est propice à créer un milieu pour regarder en moi ce qui à besoin d'être touché au moment où ça se produit. On ne peut pas commander le moment où ça se produit.

PG : L'espace dans la ville que tu photographies est-il délimité à priori?

SC : Je me donne des directions ou je choisis des lieux où je veux me rendre. Je choisis des quartiers qui sont signifiants, où il est possible de marcher, comme quand je suis à Berlin où Hong Kong, même si la présence automobile est très évidente. À Hong Kong, il y a aussi des circuits qui sont uniquement piétonniers.

PG : Les lieux que tu photographies sont des lieux populaires.

SC : Je circule dans des quartiers souvent densément populés, mais en même temps il n'y pas de grande foule dans mes images. On circule plus dans un espace de méditation; c'est ça qui m'intéresse. Je voudrais revenir sur cette question de circuits dans les marches que je fais. Souvent dans une ville que je découvre, je fais comme un cercle très irrégulier, et il y a des choses que je photographie. Le cercle peut avoir une durée de quatre, cinq, ou

six heures, et à la fin je reviens au même endroit. La journée suivante je vais faire un deuxième cercle en prenant soin de repasser sur certains lieux pour voir comment la lumière, l'expérience, ont changé. Ceci fait que souvent le lieu où je suis basé a beaucoup d'importance, puisque tous les jours je passe sur des fragments de rues à proximité de là où je réside qui souvent finissent par se croiser.

Je pense aussi à un travail où j'avais dressé une liste de tous les endroits à Montréal que je voulais photographier. J'ai réalisé après une semaine et demie de marche que ces lieux que j'avais nommés n'étaient pas si importants que ça. C'était de me rendre là, où la proximité de ces lieux était beaucoup plus riche que ce que je pouvais tirer du lieu même. En regardant les planches contactes, j'ai réalisé que la promenade, l'accès à ces lieux avait été beaucoup plus riche. Il y a toute une question d'attente, de détente, de sensibilité à la lumière, au contenu d'espace, aux murs, aux textures, qui existent dans la ville. Ça peut être des espaces très fermés qui tout à coup, parce qu'il y a une lumière ou quelqu'un, m'appellent à les photographier. Et là je peux regarder, photographier, et tourner autour, faire plusieurs photos. Des fois c'est une photo, deux photos; d'autres fois, je peux faire un rouleau complet sur ce lieu-là, étirer la rencontre pendant une demi-heure, quitter le lieu, et ensuite revenir. Il y a une danse, un ballet qui s'inscrit. Ça c'est quelque chose que j'ai appris durant la décennie des années 80, où j'ai appris à faire confiance à mes intuitions. J'ai appris à ne pas emmener la photo dans un contenu trop rationnel; ce n'est pas cet aspect qui m'intéresse. J'ai besoin d'apprendre intuitivement, d'apprendre à travers des rencontres un peu plus sombres.

PG : La marche est-elle un plaisir ou une discipline pour toi?

SC : C'est les deux, autant un plaisir que quelque chose qui exige aussi beaucoup de

discipline dans le processus créatif.

PG : La rue Saint-Laurent est un lieu de passage et de marche qui a été très photographié durant le dernier demi-siècle. Qu'est ce qui distingue ce lieu pour toi comme espace de marche?

SC : J'y réside depuis un peu plus de 30 ans; c'est un espace où j'ai beaucoup marché et

photographié. Il y a beaucoup de projets aboutis qui y ont été faits. On parlait d'Edward

Hillel, qui y a photographié les marchands. Il y a Denis Plain, qui y a photographié pour

ces photos sur le Montréal des années 80. Pour moi cette rue est devenue un peu

l'emblème de l'histoire et du développement de Montréal. C'est aussi ici que l'histoire de

l'immigration et de plusieurs cultures s'y sont croisées. Saint-Laurent a été mon canal

d'entraînement, de découvertes, d'expérimentations avant même que je vienne m'y

établir. C'est aussi une frontière, pas seulement géographique, mais aussi de langues.

PG : Justement, je me demande si, à travers la photographie, cet espace n'est pas plutôt un lieu de fusion que de séparation?

SC : Oui, mais il y a aussi toutes les références culturelles qu'il faut rajouter à tout ça.

PG : La marche est-elle un geste auquel tu accordais de l'importance avant, ou est-ce un geste qui simplement fait partie du processus photographique, comme lever le bras pour porter la camera à l'oeil?

SC : Souvent j'ai commencé des présentations en disant que la photographie, c'était

d'abord l'histoire d'une discipline de randonnées, d'explorations de la ville, et que ça

passait par la marche. C'est l'idée de circuler, c'est des cercles. Je n'ai jamais documenté

sur une carte les marches que je faisais quotidiennement. Je pense à des artistes comme

Richard Long. Ce sont des choses que je me suis souvent dit vouloir faire ou avoir dû

faire, mais que je n'ai pas faites. J'ai souvent expliqué que les 20, 30, ou 40 photos sur les

mûrs étaient l'équivalent de cinq séjours de cinq semaines et de huit heures de marche

par jour. Tout ça fait parti du processus.

PG : Aurais-tu pu produire ton œuvre sans la marche?

SC : Non.

PG : Aurais-tu continué à photographier sans la marche?

SC : Probablement pas. Pour moi c'est un moment important de la photographie, c'est un

espace de liberté incroyable. Cet espace-là de travail est laborieux, oui, mais pour moi

c'est la belle partie.

CHRITOS DIKEAKOS INTERVIEW, South Vancouver, British Columbia, 6 April 2012.

PG: Christos Dikeakos and I are in Christos's studio in Vancouver to discuss ambulation
in the work of Vancouver photographers, including his own work.

CD: If I am now interested in a history or in pictures that may have a kind of recuperative

intent, how can we deal with it? One of the traditions in Vancouver is image/text. In

image and text the poetry, the image, and the literature were not inseparable, but very

sympathetic to one another. In my case, I did not have an art school education, as was

also the case for a number of other artists that became interested in photography. Having

a university education in literature, poetics, and intellectual history informed our interest

in art history; this subject was taught as a form of dilettantism through slides, and these

were very inaccurate colour slides. It was often taught through a very Princeton-based

biographical and iconographic approach. At the same time, we had real poets and a

vibrant contemporary scene. At the same time, there were some Marxist-oriented and

very, very smart intellectual historians who were interpreting, let's say, paintings from

the 17th or 18th century in a very different way. As students, we were getting a much broader education than what you saw in art history classes. Meanwhile, many of my friends in art school were learning techniques and being mentored by some great local artist. This is not the same tradition as that experienced by those of us who went to university. At the same time, we were trying to learn a craft, which may not always have been photography, and may have been idea driven. Also, we felt a hope and a desire to be in touch with what was going on in the major metropolises, so that we kept our eyes and ears open to what was going on in these places.

PG: Can we go back to a more chronological view of what's happened in art photography in Vancouver, and in particular look at the idea of walking, or ambulatory space?

CD: It was not a very big community in the late '60s. If you were interested in art, you would gravitate towards two people at the university. One was Ian Wallace, and the other was Alvin Balkind, who came to Vancouver from the U.S. in the '50s with his partner. Then there was a whole other wave of intellectuals, poets, and people involved in literature that came from the U.S. during the Vietnam War. So, we have a very different tradition from central Canada, from Toronto. Our sense of history is absolutely, diametrically different from the central Canadian one. I'm talking about Ontario, which was always in charge, to a certain degree. On the other hand, painters like [Claude] Tousignant and [Guido] Molinari were very popular in Vancouver, even though their work was never really purchased here because we never really had a good market. Their popularity was evident in the way they were understood and in the relevance of how they took abstraction to a particular, noticeable level. Of course Ian never let that go; that's always the ground for his pictures.

PG: Was there any kind of link with what was going on in Toronto?

CD: I hate to say this, but there was no link. Okay, the link was maybe Michael Snow, simply because of what we liked and didn't like as students. We really liked Snow's work, and we liked his structuralist films.

PG: Getting back to photography.

CD: Yes, that's where art history is really important, and that's where Jeff [Wall] really started, by looking at Manet and artists like that. At the same time, they were restructuring, along with Ian and with themselves as actors.

PG: But they brought these ideas back from England?

CD: They brought them back from England, but their education continued in Europe; it didn't continue in New York. From what I've always known, New York is a very parochial place, in the sense that most people there buy from what is offered in the galleries within a few blocks of each other, and it's very market driven. Of course, it's much more cosmopolitan than Vancouver or Toronto. But we don't have to pretend to be a little apple here, and Toronto always has that pressure. We can be whatever we want; we're a metropolis at the edge of the water. You can't go any farther or you'll fall into the ocean. That also gave us the freedom to experiment with this type of photography and to really take an interest in the traditions that influence how we see this place as a metropolis. How can we reimagine the spaces here, and do we really need to be a traditional, walking street photographer in order to do so? Or can we actually take the car through this place because it seems that taking the car would actually be a very logical thing to do? I have some notes that I took some time ago that refer to the situationists and that are very *a propos*. They read as follows: "Historically, photography grew up in the city. The unique new shifts in the modern metropolis are where the camera grew up."

And in a way that's where the camera grows up here, with this new modern metropolis of Vancouver, because when you go to see the Fred Herzog exhibition, you'll say, where is this place? It says Vancouver, but there's nothing here that still exists. There's a melancholy and a joy at the same time. The melancholy is that it's gone. The honesty of it is in that poverty-stricken architecture, in the guy who made his own little house, in the worker who was not separated from his production, in the stumps that still would be in the back of the yard, or in somebody growing their own tobacco.

As an immigrant kid, I lived in the downtown where Fred was taking a lot of his pictures. The middle class had moved out of the downtown area and it was basically a lot of empty lots. In my work, these empty spaces became symbolic again, as did big monotones, these big, empty non-places. There was an element of luck for me, in that I got my second good camera and I started to look at things in the foreground and in the background. In the late '60s and early '70s, there was this incredible growth spurt in Vancouver in the background, but in the foreground it's still messy, showing this idea of contradictions. How would I get this place in the image? I still had to go through this mess; there were big piles of dirt and crap. It was like two pictures in one.

PG: Thinking of your work and Wall's photos in contrast with Herzog's photos, these form two very different threads. Herzog always stayed in line with a very street documentary approach associated with the idea of the *flaneur*. Meanwhile, before you started staging, you guys were doing stuff that was more in tune with the notion of the social landscape.

CD: This hasn't been written about, but I know it. Fred Herzog was a photographer. He was friends with a lot of the painters because he was smart enough to know where the scene was, and it wasn't with other photographers. The old photographers, the modernists, were dead. The new photographers were guys that were working for the newspaper, or

they were being hired by the province to do shots for things like the '55 or '58 provincial

yearbook. Fred was hanging out instead with some of the more radical artists, like Claude

Breeze, who was doing some very scary paintings with lynch mobs and Hiroshima-like

pictures of Vietnam. Then there was Michael Morris's very cool internationalist-style

painting, and the modernist intellectual painter Jack Shadbolt played a dominant role.

Fred was doing slide shows at the VAG. At the time I was a kid, probably in twelfth

grade, and I was interested in going to the art gallery because I would draw there, so I

also went to Herzog's slide shows. And what was in these slide shows? They were

incredibly beautiful, saturated pictures of close-ups of water reflections, with a very

brightly coloured boat, with a yellow rope. These pictures were actually incredibly

painterly. That's what he was showing for a long time, saying to the painters, "I know

what you guys are doing and I can interpret that as photography." And occasionally he

would show subject matter. I remember seeing those quite vividly and thinking, hey, you

don't have to be a painter.

PG: [Roy] Arden was telling me yesterday that for the longest time Herzog kept on
showing only the same 30 or so shots.

CD: That's right. At some point Fred was in that street photography show catalogue by

Presentation House. But before that nobody was seeing Fred's great stuff because he

would not show it.

PG: But he was doing the slide shows?

CD: Yes, but the slide shows were pandering to the dominant institution of painters. The

smell of paint, *vernissage*, that's the aesthetic that ruled. That's what sold. Photography,

drawing, and watercolour were all minor arts. And of course that was the challenge: to

blow them up that big, so they would not look like minor arts.

PG: It was about taking notice.

CD: Yes, and Ian [Wallace] is the guy. He was the guy who did it at a very important show at the Pender Street Gallery, which was run by another very important guy who should not be forgotten, Willard Holmes. When Jeff came back from teaching at SFU and saw the Pender show, he started to think about getting back into doing art. It was about scale. It was about getting it this big. And quite a few people have gotten this wrong, like Peter Galassi. These people think they've got it when they're doing those reconstruction pictures with Rodney [Graham] of St-Anthony where they're all playing roles.

It happened before that. It happened when Ian did a show with these huge black and white photographs that were hand tinted and hand painted because he wanted you to get the detailing and localising of colour in the subject matter. He did that because colour photography just wasn't at par back then. But there's also this other thing about evidence; it's about the idea-driven, the interest in the picture's characteristics. It's part of a kind of non-documentary tradition of claiming an objective picture of information and ideas, a kind of a romantic notion that there could be knowledge revealed about a new place. The pictures can be discerning without being aesthetically claiming pictures, where the urban landscapes appear as a kind of infinite and absolute negativity.

This is like my own early picture that I showed you of lot C; that and the car pictures can be seen as empty urban places. There are no people, just cars and buildings on both sides of the street, of the sidewalk. This incorporates an idea of time travel that leads to a critique of actuality and that which records it. I'm quoting Debord, who said, "The spectacle function in society is a concrete manufacture of alienation." The idea that human consciousness affects the social fabric… Workers are not a force independent to

themselves. They're always producing something other than what they want to produce. But artists can produce themselves in their production.

PG: How does this influence your interpretation of the place or space that's in front of your lens?

CD: It does so because you are critiquing the alienation of what you are seeing. You're thinking about a manufacturing of the space and how these shifts are happening, and how this topography is shifting very, very rapidly.

PG: I have not seen much work by women photographers that deals with the street as a setting.

CD: There are woman photographers; there were women filmmakers, like Ardele Lister, who did feminist films in the '70s. When things got very rough here, a lot of artists gave up being artists or they moved to Montreal or to New York. Lister works and teaches in New York. Her work was filmic, but the important street photographer is Marian Penner Bancroft. She has some very interesting photos of the city done in the tradition of Friedlander.

PG: So did Penner Bancroft bring anything distinctive in her point of view?

CD: Yes, she did. Her later work brings a sort of *poetique* of place, which maybe you would find Raymonde April does as well. The other thing I wanted to say about the situationists is that you could not critique the physical actualities of reality with painting, because painting always depends on the inner subjective expressions of the lived. But when you read Debord, I think you can say this gives you an idea, that we're living this, or perhaps you can show some examples of this. Meanwhile, abstraction is very unique to the 20th century, but it doesn't have to really deal with anything or any particular subject

matter. Like Ian [Wallace] said[179], it could be about nothing; it could be about pure

aesthetics, which is so liberating. And that's why he would never give it up. That's why

he's always got those two things happening. And right now, what's happening is that they

almost become a flag. The picture dominates with this flag of colour, which is in the

picture that goes on one side and on the other side of the painting, because he still

considers them as paintings. There are some earlier works where the painting actually

intercepts the picture and cuts it out; it's almost like a collage where he's aggressively

attacking the subject matter. But right now it seems that the photography is dominating.

PG: Are you saying that the medium has overtaken the idea?

CD: Yes, I think that the photograph is front and center. The other thing about Ian is that

he really is a philosopher: he likes to go back. He will revisit.

PG: So it's always a work in progress.

CD: Yes, it's always a work in progress, and that's not the case for me. I will visit certain

grand themes while wanting to work them out and I will take a risk – just as our friend

Roy [Arden] has taken a giant risk – and say this is important now. With Ian, he sticks to

that; he's quite remarkable in that way. I really find that quite admirable, while other

people will criticise that.

PG: Talking about Ian, can you tell me more about the term photo-conceptualism?

CD: Nobody wants to talk about that because everybody thinks it describes our

generation, artists who are in their 60s today, and it excludes the younger generation's art

production. Here in Vancouver, the critics are trying to find some sort of term to define a

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[179] During an informal discussion between Christos Dikeakos, Ian Wallace, and the
author April 4, 2012, at Vancouver Special in Vancouver.

loose group of people who, at that time, had a great sense of camaraderie and support, but by the '80s had become fairly competitive, so much so that the group dissolved.

PG: Who was part of this group?

CD: Rodney [Graham], Ken Lum, Ian [Wallace], Rob Klein to a certain extent, and Jeff [Wall]. They were making huge inroads in Europe, but I wasn't that interested in doing that kind of work at that particular time. I was working hard to keep a family going and getting very interested in the art culture of the northwest coast and in the question of connections between us and them.

So, what does photo-conceptualism mean? It means that you're not a painter. It means that your work is photographically driven, and also that the work includes some very interesting and potent ideas that relate to a sense of reality. This could be a domestic reality or one that relates to the topography of this place. Maybe it's that crazy reality of how we're always looking at the cracks and fissures and garbage in this very beautiful place, and we're always putting that in the forefront of our pictures, while the background may still show this great place. So, why are we always showing these contradictions? Because we are paying attention to Debord and to social critique, but that does not mean that aesthetics are not there. Photo-conceptualism is about all that; it's about philosophy and the traditional aesthetics of appreciation and taking the time to look at things.

FRANÇOISE SULLIVAN INTERVIEW,[180] Montreal, Quebec, 21 June 2011.

PG: Can you tell me how the idea for your project of photographing your walk between two museums developed, and talk about the intellectual and artistic context in which you made this work?

FS: The intellectual context of 1970 was determined by the fact that it came two years after May '68 in Paris. In 1965 Donald Judd already had done minimalist works. Each new movement takes place in response to the previous ones. The movement before minimalism was pop art, and before that came the abstract expressionists and their Montreal equivalent, if we can say that, the automatists. I was part of the automatists, part of the first five to form the group. The others were Pierre Gauvreau, Fernand Leduc, Louise Renaud, and Magdeleine Desroches-Noiseaux; there was also Adrian Villandré, who gradually took another direction. So, you could say that the five of us were the pillars of the automatist movement. In 1970, there were many theorists who rejected abstract painting in particular, but also painting in general. Artists were less important than curators. We had reached a point where it was being said that works in museums were not interesting, were not important, and that in the end even museums should be removed. It made no sense. Today all that has been forgotten, but at the time that point of view was very strong, and many artists I knew were very upset, as was I. So, I thought, what do you do? What do you do when you are an artist and your base crumbles? It was in this context that I decided to ask myself what there was outside that was not in the museum. I said to myself, let's go and see. So I decided that I was going to walk from the MBA [Musée des Beaux-Arts]. For me, that was a temple where I had been going on my own since I was young girl; it was a marvellous place in my youth and had continued to

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[180] Translated by the author.

be ever since. So, I decided to walk from the MBA to the MMCA [Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art] and back, and to see what there was in between. I would take my camera, an ordinary camera, and I would take a photo at each street corner, without making any aesthetic choices. I'd take a photograph of exactly what there was at that moment, and then I'd continue on like that.

PG: What was in front of you? Didn't you take time to frame the images?

FS: Absolutely not.

PG: Did you look through the viewfinder?

FS: Yes.

PG: Do you remember what type of camera it was? Your photos are vertical, but almost square in format, which does not correspond to the 35mm film format. Is this a decision that you made afterward in the dark room when the photos were being printed? Did you print the photos yourself?

FS: I don't really remember. I know I developed some photos myself. I had a dark room for a time.

PG: In a conversation you had with Guy Cogeval published in one of your exhibition catalogues, you mentioned that 1970 marked a new period for you. You stated that there was a break then, a turning of the page from automatism and the past to move towards something new.

FS: That didn't happen because I wanted it to, but instead because of the power of those events of the time.

PG: So, in that context, was that change still a gesture of resistance?

FS: It was an act of resistance, but at the same time an attempt to see what could be done. It was also *une oeuvre*. I was looking for ways. It was a form of resistance made up of questions that wanted answers. Also, it was about seeing what existed outside the museum in the everyday.

PG: What guided your choice of this particular route? There were photos taken where you stood in the middle of the highway. This was a dangerous route.

FS: The MMCA was at Cité du Havre; you had to pass by there.

PG: You could have chosen to pass through Old Montreal, which would have been less risky.

FS: I must say that when I was returning, I was picked up by the police on the highway. The officer was very nice and asked what I was doing. I explained, and I was taken in the car and dropped off at the city entrance.

PG: So your trajectory was an *aller-retour*?"

FS: Yes, I started at the MBA and walked to the MMCA, and then back to the MBA. I live in Montreal; I don't live in Cité du Havre. The MBA was the place I had been going to on Sundays since I was twelve years old. These were two spaces that were dear to me. So, from the MBA, I walked down Crescent Street to René Lévesque, which was Dorchester at the time.

PG: I would love to see the whole work with all the pictures. I have never seen it in its entirety.

FS: You know, it will be showing in the *Traffic* exhibition.

PG: All the photos?

FS: Yes, I believe so. So, I went along Dorchester to Place Ville Marie; I turned right and kept on going along the shortest path to my destination. It was 40 degrees out that day.

PG: So it was during the summer; do you remember the month?

FS: No. Why?

PG: I am asking because during the same period… You know Bill Vazan?

FS: Yes.

PG: On June 28th, 1970, he did his walk along Saint-Laurent for the piece, "Walking into the Vanishing Point." In that work, he stopped at each intersection and photographed what was before him.

FS: I don't remember this and if I was aware of it or not.

PG: I asked him the same question when I met him. I noted that in 1970, Françoise Sullivan did her walk between the two museums, and I asked if he'd had a chance to discuss this with you. He said that he knew your work, but did not know if it was created before or after his piece. From his point of view, this was all done in the spirit of the period.

FS: That's quite correct.

PG: Why did you choose to walk? You could have decided to do your route by car, on a bicycle, by bus – why on foot? Were you influenced by land art works of the time, such as Richard Long's?

FS: I don't remember. It is possible that I would have seen this in art magazines. As you

said, this was all going on at the time.

PG: For your walk, you were working with two mediums: walking and photography. The first is free and open, while the second always brings us back to what is inside the viewfinder.

FS: I wanted this work to be objective.

PG: Is this possible?

FS: Yes, by framing directly from my height in the space I was in and taking the picture.

That was the rule I gave myself.

PG: Framing your project with guidelines is contrary to the automatist spirit.

FS: Absolutely.

PG: So, you had turned the page and were willing to approach your work in a conceptual light.

FS: And I had done something conceptual around the same period or maybe a bit before.

At Concordia, there was a conceptual show where I exhibited two works.

PG: Have you done other walks that you photographed?

FS: I did some in Europe; I photographed blocked windows and doors.

PG: So, for that project your trajectory in the city was guided by blocked windows and doors.

FS: Yes, that were blocked.

PG: The '70s were a very politically charged period. Do you see or did you see your walk as politically significant?

FS: Yes, in light of the point I mentioned earlier about calling into question the rejection of the museum. There were also horrible things going on in painting. I was affected by what was going on. I had wanted change so much during the automatist period, but afterward the rejection of painting was very difficult for me, and for others as well.

PG: At the time, how did you compare painting to other mediums, like the photograph or walking?

FS: For me, painting was the *summum*. There were three forms of art: painting, music, and literature.

PG: You are, to my knowledge, the only woman to have engaged with this form of conceptual work at the time. Were you aware of this?

FS: I considered myself an artist. A woman artist, and on the same level as other artists.

GABOR SZILASI INTERVIEW, Montreal, Quebec, 17 February 2012.

PG: What comes to your mind in reference to photography and walking in your work?

GS: In terms of walking along the street, the main work was really done on rue Sainte-Catherine. In the late '70s, early '80s, I took about 150 4x5 photographs along Ste-Catherine, moving from east to west. True, I did walk along Saint-Laurent, but I didn't

photograph that much. I walk there to eat, to talk to people. I did some photography there over the years, but really I walked there for social reasons more than photographic reasons.

PG: Why haven't you walked that space more with your camera? Is it a space that resists?

GS: No, no, it wasn't a question of resistance. I did photograph with a 35mm camera on Saint-Laurent, but I found that Ste-Catherine Street, from a photographic point of view, was more interesting. Saint-Laurent offered me more socially, but I liked to photograph a really commercial street because of its industrial architecture, shop windows, signage. Somehow I had more artistic interest in the commercial street of a large, North American city.

PG: Do you see any distinctive contribution that walking brings to the photographic act?

GS: I think walking is very important in the photographic act. It is really through walking that I discover the cachet of a street. Walking on St-Catherine Street, I observe the shop windows, the signs. On such a street, you walk two hundred meters or so and you're in a totally different neighbourhood, an area with a different personality.

PG: You are prolific with large-format equipment, as well as with hand-held cameras. Obviously, the Leica is better suited to the act of walking and taking photos. How to you negotiate which tool you will use when you are working in walking spaces like the sidewalk?

GS: It really has to do with my development and maturing as a photographer. I loved to do street photography, as every starting photographer does. We all looked to Cartier-Bresson. But after the early '80s, I stopped doing street photography, in part because I found it a bit exploitive to be photographing people without their consent. So, I got more interested in confronting people when photographing them. I wanted to be accepted in a

given arena and accepted as the photographer. The 4x5 camera helped accomplish this because it made it very easy for people to know I was there.

PG: But you were often on the other side of the street.

GS: Yes.

PG: I'm thinking of your photo of the restaurant Le Texan, on the corner of Lambert Closse Street and Ste-Catherine. There are people walking. They are small because the architecture prevails, but these people don't seem to be aware that they are part of a photograph.

GS: The only thing I didn't want in the image was a truck, but having people in it didn't bother me. More than that, I wanted to have people in the photographs. That was important.

PG: For the social aspect?

GS: Yes. When photographing a street, what people wear is part of it; that defines the year, the decade, the period. When I saw someone coming, I would even wait until that person was in the right position and then release the shutter. I definitely wanted to have people in the photographs.

PG: So, in this case, you are using the medium as a very formal tool, where you are controlling each element. That's in contrast to when you have your Leica; it's what you do rather than coming home and looking at your contact sheet for the shots from the day. If fact, there is little room for chance.

GS: Yes. The 4x5 is ideal for creating the sharpness of the image, which I find very important to render texture. Also, the light is very important. Sometimes I would go back to the same building two or three times to photograph it in the right light.

PG: I see what you mean; as in the colour photos of commercial signage on Ste-Catherine.

GS: Yes.

PG: When you refer to the use of the large format, is this related to some sort of so-called quest for truth, or is it purely documentary?

GS: It's purely documentary. I was influenced by certain photographers: Paul Strand, the New Topographics photographers. By looking at those photographs, I discovered how important texture is. This is very often defined by the angle of light. The amount of information in a picture was always very important for me. That's why I didn't photograph flowers.

PG: When you use the term 'information', what are you referring to?

GS: Content.

PG: Social content, material content?

GS: Yes.

PG: Is there one that prevails over the other? When you are out there on the street with your camera, what are you looking for, exactly?

GS: I'm looking for form. I don't know if you've read that book by Robert Adams where he says, "Beauty is form"? If the form is weak, then the image as communication is reduced.

PG: I'm thinking about a few images you took in Hungary that show high angle shots of the border of a sidewalk and street with part of a female figure walking. These remind me of a photo that Kertész did in the '30s.[181]

GS: At that time, I didn't know a lot about photography. I just photographed what I liked, or what captured my attention. There was no theory. I had to figure out exposure and development. But that particular photograph was something very intuitive. I guess there must have been something in the form of that photograph, in the diagonal line.

PG: Do you remember if you were aware of Kertész's photo?

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[181] I am referring to frames 10-12 from contact sheet 1956-2, page 15, in Szilasi's exhibition catalogue, *The Eloquence of the Everyday*, and Kertész's photograph, *Sidewalk,* Paris, 1925.

GS: No, not at that time. That was before the uprising in '56. I was visiting the Alliance Française that was part of the embassy and I saw *Paris Match* and French fashion magazines. That's basically how I first discovered photography, by looking at magazines. I saw Avedon's first photographs when he did fashion photography in Paris, just on the street. That's why I discovered Izis. I can't remember seeing any of André Kertész. That was really my first contact with photography.

PG: Which photographers in Canada come to your mind with respect to photography and walking?

GS: I have to think about it…

PG: Am I right in saying that, when you're walking with the large format camera, you are looking at the architecture, and the people in the photo are there as form in the image, while when you are shooting with the Leica, you are looking at the people, and the architecture moves to the background?

GS: Yes, that's a good way of putting it. With the 35mm, I'm looking for people. Or what could happen is that I would find an interesting element, an architectural element; it could be a poster. Then I would wait, sometimes quite a long time, until someone came into the image who made the poster come alive.

PG: Like Cartier-Bresson's *Behind the Gare St-Lazare* 1932 photo?

GS: Yes, it's true.

PG: This space that is the meeting place of walking and photography, which is often the sidewalk, what do you see coming out of it?

GS: I've always been more interested in photographing the everyday and normal people, who can have quite a lot of nobility. When I travel in rural Quebec or take pictures in the street, it's the ordinary people that interest me.

PG: This space of photography and walking, do you see it as attached to a specific class of people or specific group?

GS: For me, generally it's important that I photograph an environment, a milieu where I can feel that even if people are poor, even very poor, they are proud. I am seeking people who respect their environment, who haven't given up.

PG: You've traveled and taken photos in many countries. Again, concerning this space of photography and walking, do you feel or see anything distinctive about this space that is Canadian?

GS: Yes, of course: language. If I can talk to people, I can find out more about the street and the life of the street through conversations. If I don't speak the language, then I become a tourist, someone who is just passing through.

PG: But aren't you just passing through anyway?

GS: No. Not in my own city. If I'm walking around in my city, I walk around differently than in a city where I don't know the language at all. Obviously, my camera would be directed first at something that is very special and very visual, like a sign. But I won't photograph it if I don't know what it means. So the language is very important.

PG: Can you tell me about the influence of Nathan Lyons's social landscape theory?

GS: His thing was the snapshot. That encouraged me to go more into the sort of photography where change is very important. I would photograph something and then go back a few years later to re-photograph it. This element of social change became more and more important. That encouraged me to look at my old photographs and try to see something deeper than just a snapshot.

PG: After all of these years of working with a large format camera and your concern for form, do you think you can still do a snapshot, or have you been, in a way, contaminated?

GS: Well, that's a good question. When I was in Poland, I wanted to return to my origins and did not bring a large format camera. I wanted my photos to be more intuitive and

brought a small one, but before releasing the shutter I realized that I was asking myself

why I was taking that particular photo and what it meant.

PG: That's no longer a snapshot.

GS: Yes, exactly. The motivation was different.

BILL VAZAN INTERVIEW, Montreal, Quebec, 19 November 2009.

PG: We have been talking about your *Highway 37* project from 1970; I would to look at another one of your works from the same period where you walked up Saint-Laurent taking photos at each intersection.

BV: One of my leitmotifs of the time was extending the line, getting the line off the

canvas. Extending it not actually by making the line physically, in painted or sculptural

terms, but instead by incorporating what was already in the social network. This meant

walking on the streets, riding the subway, riding the bus, or driving. It was very much a

conceptual project because there was no physicality to the whole thing, except the photo

documentation which would come out of it. And the idea in my walks was that I would

note with a photo which street corner I was passing over. When you're doing something

that verbal, something about language, you're not concerned about the artistic qualities of

the thing. It's very straightforward; there is no artistic pretention there.

PG: Do you see your walks as performance?

BV: I don't like the word 'performance'. People now use the word 'performance' within

another palimpsest of verbal and critical assessment, and they use their own terms within

the new, favourite ways of looking at art. And some of this has bearing on what happened

at that time. To me my work at the time was not conceptual; you may use the word, but I didn't see it as that.

PG: These are terms that have been tagged on after.

BV: There's a lot of stuff that's been piled onto all that prior to now, and onto other kinds of art, too. It can somehow hide or conceal what the intent of the artist was at that time. Usually, the attempts by artists are more pragmatic and more prosaic, more so than the interpretations that are put on them.

PG: So this was all about different strategies for extending the line?

BV: Yes. Extending the line doesn't have to mean making it; it could be me appropriating it. *L'objet trouvé* kind of idea. My conversation with Patrice Loubier in the *Walking into the Vanishing Point* catalogue develops those ideas. When you get to being very strict in your conceptual analysis, you want to make it as close to language or as close to the conceptual framework as possible.

PG: Why the choice of black and white over color for your photos?

BV: Apart from the fact that it's less costly is the fact that it restricts all the possibilities within photography, reducing them to more of a structural idea. It's black and white. You're not getting into all kinds of things like atmosphere, color graduations, and all that sort of stuff.

PG: What were your references or influences for using the urban landscape, mapping, using the camera?

BV: It was a very general thing. I didn't have too much historic baggage accumulated at that time. I wasn't attached to a cultural thing specific to Quebec, nor any exclusively Canadian developments. I was more in tune with being away from art and all my likes tending towards this, let's say, Dada, or neo-Dada. What was happening in the world at

the time was like a purification of what was, in art terms, minimalism and that sort of thing. Making some trips to New York, reading the art magazines: it was this generalized input that led me to doing this kind of work. I did have a kind of affinity for what [Guido] Molinari and [Claude] Tousignant were doing. That's how my paintings were working at that time, before I made the jump from actually painting these lines – these stripes with these bars – into making these lines and bars on the ground or on the floors of institutions and eventually in the landscape itself. And then dropping all of that and taking the lines that already existed there.

Appendix 2

Places, Spaces, Signs, and Objects seen along boulevard Saint-Laurent

Public fountain, apartment building, stop sign, house, office building, army surplus store, bar, satellite dish, park, cigarette but, slush, tobacco store, ice-cream stand, box, curtain, thrift store, copy center, advertisement billboard, currency exchange counter, charcuterie, dome, cinema, hair salon**,** pub, antique shop**,** cup, stairs, gutter, clothing store, *dépanneur*, fire hydrant, fish market, post office, furniture store, trash, fire alarm, gas station tree, grocery store, glass, window grill, hair salon, hardware store, head shop, bush, lamp, jewellery store, music store, nail salon, pet shop, puddle, car, paint store, pop can, gate, news paper stand, paper, stool, drawing, pediment, pizza counter, porn theatre, parking meter, tattoo parlour, peep show, red square, barber shop, restaurant, strip club, bottle, shoe store, snow, TV antenna, second hand store, smoked-meat restaurant, stationery store, sculpture, bakery, scooter, theatre, door knob, travel agency, water fountain, traffic light, street sign, weed, walking sign, manhole, gas duct, waste bin, chair, water hose, flowers, photo studio, flower shop, pillar, advertisement poster, truck, ashtray, bicycle, cabaret, brick, motorcycle, fence, sports store, alley, side-street, public parking, table, butcher shop, umbrella, arch, civic number, truck, chimney, pond shop, street lamp, cone, electronics store, private parking entrance, street traffic line, library, parking sign, bicycle stand, bus stop, hotel, crack in the street, bus shelter, crack in the sidewalk, phone booth, dry cleaner, public bench, grass, gravel, cement, cobblestone, metro station, beauty salon, door, bank, window, graffiti tag, tent, flower pot, arched window, liquor store, blackboard, camera store, menu, massage parlour, flag, mosque, mailbox, door handle,

church, spa, wood, door frame, mannequin, drain pipe, window frame, garbage bag, pharmacy, public bath, paper scrap, sewing machine, gym, wig…