The Museum's Politics of Space and Colonial Framing of Indigenous Art
The Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion's Inuit Art Exhibition

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts (Art History) at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 2023

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

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Entitled: The Museum's Politics of Space and Colonial Framing of Indigenous ArtThe Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion's Inuit Art Exhibition

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Art History

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Abstract

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This thesis examines museums' spatial politics in the representation of Indigenous art history questioning the affects and effects of architecture on visitors' experience and interpretation of museum narratives. The body of research my analysis draws from focuses primarily on theories of space and spatial organization, architecture, and design, as well as histories of settler colonialism and the racialization of bodies and knowledge through modes of rationalization.

Looking carefully at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, I attend to the ways in which the collection of Inuit art housed on the fourth-floor galleria is made inconsequential and how the space enacts a disservice to the artworks and artists presented, supporting national colonial imaginaries anchored in settler colonialism. My inquiry is first and foremost informed by a decolonial theoretical framework. This thesis attempts at decolonizing my own knowledge and asking how and if the Inuit art collection on the last floor of the Claire and Marc Bourgie pavilion allows for decolonizing knowledge.

I contend that experiences of this space speak to bigger and more complex issues of representation and decolonization in cultural institutions and respond to larger discourses critical of institutional and socio-political realities. Accordingly, I recognize the dual relationship between museum institutions—their physical spaces and the objects displayed—and the visitors, along with the active role of each in making sense of what is being presented, constructing, and organizing knowledge. I question the information and insights offered by the materials and objects and the relationships they facilitate. In sum, I ask: what knowledge is made available? How does this knowledge relate to the lived realities and the histories of the cultures put on display?

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to everyone who has contributed to the completion of this master thesis and provided invaluable support, guidance, and encouragement throughout this journey. First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr. John Potvin, and my second reader, Dr. Heather Igloliorte, for their invaluable expertise and insightful feedback, going back to my undergraduate years and which were instrumental in shaping the direction of this research.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the faculty members and academic staff, particularly acknowledging Dr Kathryn Simpson and Dr. Rebecca Duclos whose teachings transcend the boundaries of the classroom. The commitment of the Department of Art History to fostering alternative approaches to research and their support for creative critical thinking has been instrumental in shaping my academic journey.

I am indebted to my friends and family for their boundless encouragement and understanding during this demanding period of my academic pursuit. I am more than grateful for my colleagues and dearest friends, Laura Pollard and Sabrina Smith, and their unwavering support in all spheres of life. This experience would not have been the same without you two. A special thank you to Dakota Twells, Napoleon, Lord Darcia III, and my cats for their invaluable emotional support and to Harry Karakokkinos for his time, care, wit, and wisdom. I am also thankful to curator Jacques Des Rochers for sharing his time and experience, and to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts for granting me access to their archive.

Lastly, I want to recognize the influence of all the authors, researchers, art historians, and scholars whose works have laid the foundation for my study. Their ideas and contributions have been fundamental in shaping the intellectual framework of this thesis. I would also like to take this

opportunity to acknowledge that this academic journey took place on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Kanien'kehà:ka people, a place known today as Montreal. As a young white scholar of settler origin, I wish to see my research as a small contribution to the struggle against the institutional systems of oppression that have dispossessed Indigenous people of their lands and denied their rights to self-determination and self-representation.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Audrey Robillard

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MMFA: Montréal Museum of Fine Arts

SCT: Settler Colonial Theory

CMB: Claire and Marc Bourgie pavilion

Introduction

Beginning in the 1960s, many scholars and artists have addressed and interrogated changes in society's considerations and perceptions of museums and their attributed roles and responsibilities, investigating museums' social influence and agency.[1] They began to question the neutrality of museum space and examine institutions' controversies, issues, and blind spots of their institutional apparatuses. Engaged in the resulting movement, institutional critique, artists and scholars relentlessly ask their viewers to conceptualize alternative spaces and modes of collecting and display. In the 1990s, James Clifford, building on Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the contact zone, proposed to see the museum in the then emergent post/de-colonial context.[2] Thinking through colonial encounters, the concept of the contact zone refers to sociocultural spaces where cultures meet and clash, often framed by asymmetrical relations of power, and sites of encounters where power is continuously negotiated.[3] To think of museums as spaces of colonial encounters, Clifford argues, "provides a way of understanding, and addressing, the concerns of contemporary indigenous peoples."[4] He continues,

> As long as museums are thought of 'as collections of universal culture, repositories of uncontested value, sites of progress, discovery, and the accumulation of human, scientific, or national patrimonies,' that is, as end products or witnesses of colonial

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[1] Clifford argued, "When museums are seen as contact zones, their organizing structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship—a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull. The organizing structure of the museum-as-collection functions like Pratt's frontier. A centre and a periphery are assumed: the centre a point of gathering, the periphery an area of discovery. The museum, usually located in a metropolitan city, is the historical destination for the cultural productions it lovingly and authoritatively salvages, cares for, and interprets." James Clifford, "Museums as Contact Zones," *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 192–193.

[2] James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation,* 191–196.

[3] Nicks Trudy, "Introduction", *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003): 20.

> achievement, we will continue to marginalize non-Western peoples and deny them agency and legitimacy in the past and the present.[5]

Many scholars and art professionals have embraced and contributed to the call for decolonizing museums and reviewing the institutions' administration and curatorial practices aiming to resolve the inequalities of, and sustained by, colonialism and its repressive structures. The Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples*, published in 1992 in an important example of critical action for better understanding between museums and Indigenous communities in Canada. Consisting of art professionals and scholars, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, along with community members and elders, the published report developed "an ethical framework and strategies for Aboriginal Nations to represent their history and culture in concert with cultural institutions"[6] which greatly impacted museum practices across Canada. Decades later, museums, scholars and Indigenous communities are continuously striving to cooperate and develop a framework for the presentation of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis arts, cultures, and histories in settler Canadian museums.

In Canada, scholars and communities are still actively contesting the country's multicultural veneer of celebratory inclusion and its covert participation in institutional violence, systemic discrimination, and historical amnesia. However, the scholarship supporting decolonizing efforts in art institutions rarely factors the corporeal and sensory experiences of their architecture, exhibition spaces, and curated spatial narratives. These directly frame their representation of Indigenous arts, cultures, and histories and influence their interpretation by visitors, supporting or

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[5] James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation*, 213, quoted in Nicks Trudy, "Introduction", 20.
[6] Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples*, Ottawa: Canadian Museums Associations and Assembly of First Nations, 1992. Also see Stephanie Bolton, "An Analysis of the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples: The Changing Representation of Aboriginal Histories in Museums," (Master Thesis, Concordia University, 2004).

negating cultural institutions' decolonial actions. In fact, comparatively yet not dissimilar to museum studies and art history, the fields of architecture and design have been slow to grapple with colonialism and its impacts. Acknowledging that one major function of museums is to define and present collective socio-cultural identities,[7] I argue that we must interrogate not only the curatorial decisions of art institutions but more critically question how their spaces and architecture influence museums goers and their reception and consumption of the objects on display standing in lieu of the nation's socio-cultural and political identity.

In this thesis, I inquire if there is space to effect tangible change when the museum's institutional nature, in part performed by its architecture, is intimately tied to histories of imperialism, settler colonialism, and the racialization of bodies and knowledge through modes of rationalization. To answer this query, I examine the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) Claire and Marc Bourgie (CMB) pavilion, built in 2011, and more specifically its fourth-floor galleria. The fourth addition to the museum district, the CMB pavilion houses the Quebec and Canadian art permanent collections and features "our country's artistic heritage," spanning from the 1700s to 1980s.[8] Displaying a white marble and ribbon windows façade [Figure 1], the geometric pavilion was designed by Provencher Roy architects.[9] Sensitive to their projects' contexts and environments, the firm worked toward a complete integration of the building to its surroundings,

[7] In her chapter "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," scholar Carol Duncan explores the functions of museums as Western symbols of political value and national identity and the ceremonial nature of their architecture as supporting structured experiences. She demonstrates how "museums can be powerful identity-defining machines. To control a museum means precisely to control the representation of a community and some of its highest, most authoritative truths. It also means the power to define and rank people, to declare some as having a greater share in the community's common heritage – in its very identity." Carol Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display,* ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 101-102.

[8] "Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion", Montreal Museum of Fine Art, https://www.mbam.qc.ca/en/the-museum/claire-and-marc-bourgie-pavilion/

[9] Provencher Roy architects is a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary firm whose work ranges from hospitals and museums to schools and offices as well as public spaces and gardens.

emulating the spirit of the adjacent church.[10] Under the direction of curator Jacques Desrochers and exhibition designer Daniel Castonguay, the pavilion's collections are presented in an inverted chronology, displaying modern works on the first floors and retracing Canada's and Quebec's settler colonial history up to the third floor. On the fourth and last level of the building is the Inuit art collection, titled "*Takuminartut*: Contemporary Inuit Art, 1948-present." The exhibition presents a mix of ancient, modern and contemporary artworks by Inuit artists amidst panoramic views of Mount Royal and the Golden Square Mile District [Figures 2–4]. In this thesis I examine the affects and socio-cultural implications of the space in regard to the museum's role as a repository of knowledge and symbol of the nation's identity. I recognize the richness of the objects in the collection, yet focus not on what is being presented, but how. Considering the floor's spatial organization in light of theories of space, architecture, and design, what stories are performed here? What is displayed and for whom? I argue that, in the experience of the space, the Inuit art collection is actually incidental to the floor's architecture and framed views of the cities. Primarily, I attend to the ways in which the collection of Inuit art is made inconsequential and how, I thus argue, the space enacts a disservice to the artworks and artists presented. Nevertheless, the origin and nature of the collection are important to discuss.

The first Inuit artworks of the collection were acquired in 1953 by the then curator of Decorative Arts and Ancient Cultures, Frederick Cleveland Morgan as recommended by artist and arts administrator James A. Houston after having attended the Canadian Handicrafts Guild's first exhibition-sale of "Eskimo" art organized in Montreal.[11] Today, the collection is made up of more

[10] "Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion of Québec and Canadian Art—Montreal Museum of Fine Arts", Provencher Roy, last modified 2023, https://provencherroy.ca/en/projects/mmfa-claire-and-marc-bourgie-pavilion-of-quebec-and-canadian-art/

[11] Louis Gagnon, *Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' Collection*, eds. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and Jacques Des Rochers (Montréal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2011), 1: 268. Constraints of space do not allow me to delve deeper into this critical, influential, and ongoing history, nor into James Houston's influential role in the recognition

than 700 artworks from almost as many Inuit artists and ranging from a variety of mediums such as sculpture, engravings, prints, drawings, ornaments, etc. However, currently, only a small portion of the collection is on display. *Takuminartut* predominantly presents sculptures made of various materials such as soapstone, serpentine, ivory, bones, etc., in different sizes and forms and aligned side by side in glass cases, as well as a small selection of drawing and prints.[12] Despite the small space allotted to this permanent exhibition [insert sq footage?], the collection displays Inuit artists' ingenuity and a combination of traditional knowledges and legends with contemporary themes and techniques. Interrupting the exhibition solely dedicated to Inuit art is a sculpture by Canadian artist Shary Boyle depicting Sedna, an Inuit mythical figure, goddess of the sea, looking up a small boat entering the arctic sea and boarding a priest, a GRC officer, and a Hudson Bay representative.[13]

I contend that experiences of this space speak to bigger and more complex issues of representation and decolonization in cultural institutions and respond to larger discourses critical of institutional and socio-political realities. Material and discursive, they are made of narrative processes of invention. Accordingly, I recognize the dual relationship between museum institutions—their physical spaces and the objects displayed—and the visitors, along with the active role of each in making sense of what is being presented, constructing, and organizing knowledge. I question the information and insights offered by the architecture framing the objects on display, and the relationships its facilitates and dismisses. In the present research I discuss the

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and promotion of Inuit art, and thus the MMFA's acquisitions. I strongly suggest looking at Igloliorte, Heather, "Chapter 2: "Hooked Forever on Primitive Peoples": James Houston and the Transformation of "Eskimo Handicrafts" to Inuit Art." In *Mapping Modernisms: Art, Indigeneity, Colonialism,* Elisabeth Harney and Ruth Phillips (eds.). Durham: Duke University Press 2019: 62-90.

[12] As of May 2023, prints were taken down from the space of the exhibition following a minor flooding in the space.

[13] Born in Ontario, Shary Boyle is a white woman artist who collaborated with several Inuit artists such as Shuvinai Ashoona and Pierre Aupilardjuk. Despite her status as an ally to Indigenous communities, her inclusion in the Inuit art collection is often frowned upon by Inuit communities, artists, and scholars. Nevertheless, her sculpture *Mer Changeante*, included in the display, critically comments on the colonial interferences of the Canadian government, the Hudson Bay Company, and Jesuit missionaries in the North.

colonial qualities of the space's architecture in displaying Inuit art as subordinates to the views of and connections with the city the floor's spatial organization and structure prioritize. The Quebec and Canadian art pavilion presents a sleek geometric façade combining marble and glass. The use of the latter structures the spatial organization of each floor, establishing increasing connections with the pavilion's urban surroundings. Culminating on the top floor, glass significantly shapes the design, organization, and experience of this specific space. In fact, its dominance forces an abrupt separation of the floor space segregating *Takuminartut*'s display and concealing the collection from visitors' gaze. Supported by further design and structural elements, the space importantly contradicts the message of inclusion and celebration of Inuit art brought forth by the MMFA. Instead, I contend that the dominance of the structure over the representations of and by Inuit communities projects and supports a colonial narrative culturally producing the 'North' as a vast and empty terrain onto which inscribe the essence of Canadian-ness.[14] More precisely, as Lisa Cooke aptly explains, it "is the work of settler colonial national-imaginaries—to produce stories, places, and symbols that draw people into the 'imagined community' of these settler colonial nations by creating comfortable distance between a historical colonial 'then' and a contemporary 'now'."[15] Informed by Cooke's discussion, I propose that the location of the Inuit art exhibition, spatially and conceptually removed from the present and integrated into the artistic fabric of Quebec and Canada's cultural heritage, aligns with settler colonial processes and the creation of a colonial-national imaginary. In doing so, I examine how the fourth floor's architecture mediates settler colonial practices of power which in turn actively define its identity and experience as place

[14] Lisa Cooke, "'North' in a Contemporary Canadian National-Cultural Imaginaries: A Haunted Phantasm," *Settler Colonial Studies 6,* no. 3 (2016): 235-236.
[15] *Ibid*., 236.

and thus needs to be decolonized. In other words, I discuss how the sociality of the space under study is directly impacted and replicates its colonial spatiality.[16]

Therefore, I ask: How does architecture and spatial organization and design relate to past and lived realities of the cultures put on display? What subjectivities are put forth and which are denied? What is being presented and, most importantly, what is not? What kind of temporality are the pavilion and its top floor enacting? Which underlying narratives are they putting forward and how do these interact with the sociocultural and political realities of those whose history is being displayed? And most importantly, how do space and its subjects speak to contemporary Indigenous struggles for self-determination, representation, and land reclamations?

[16] Kim Dovey, *Becoming Places: Urbanism/Architecture/Identity/Power* (London: Routledge, 2010), and Kim Dovey*, Framing Places: Mediating Power in Built Form* (London: Routledge, 1999).

A Note on Methods

My inquiry into the MMFA Claire and Marc Bourgie pavilion's fourth floor is first and foremost informed by a decolonial theoretical framework.[17] When contending with decolonial methodologies and theories, it is important to recognize the limitations of the process and structure of this master thesis (temporal, spatial, and institutional) and to acknowledge my position within the larger decolonial debate. Ultimately, decolonization is concerned with giving back the land, for which I have no authority.[18] This thesis endeavors in asking how and if the Inuit art collection on the last floor of the Claire and Marc Bourgie pavilion allows for decolonizing the understanding of history presented.[19] To this end, it is important to note that I am critiquing settler colonial institutional practices and settler colonial knowledge by drawing from and reflecting on Indigenous and decolonial methodologies, concerns, and practices. I respect and employ Indigenous knowledges to argue and demonstrate how and why the institution's space, architecture, and design, are harmful to both its non-Indigenous and Indigenous visitors and to the members of the society it represents and aims to educate.

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[17] The relationship between the space under study and myself, the author, is personal and stems from a deep sense of unease in regard to its spatial and material organization, and representation of Inuit art and culture. It is personal, and yet reflectively collective. Above all, I would like to believe it demonstrates a wider awakening to and awareness of larger and overarching issues of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. To borrow from Ruth B. Phillips, eminent Canadian scholar and Indigenous ally of settler colonial descent, "I write from a specific subjectivity, time, and place—from my perspective as a settler scholar in Canada at a moment in its history when a national project of decolonization has achieved widespread national support." In her 2022 article "The issue is moot: Decolonizing art/artifact," published in the Journal of Material Culture, Ruth Phillips reflects on the emerging and expanding field of Indigenous studies and its impact on the conceptualizations of collections of art and artifact amassed at the height of the colonial era. My perspective as an art historian and scholar of Canadian settler colonial origin is similar, as is the time and place from which I am writing this thesis. Like Phillips, I was trained to ask questions and formulate arguments arising from and aligning with Western classical concerns and disciplines. Nonetheless, I have been privileged to learn in a post-Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) era, from professors and scholars engaged in decolonizing the various fields of art history, and in the wake of various institutional changes. Ruth Phillips, "The Issue is Moot: Decolonizing Art/Artifact," *Journal of Material Culture 27,* no. 1 (2022), 49.

[18] Eve Tuck, and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Tabula Rasa 38* (2021): 61–111.

[19] More precisely, how does it fail or succeed to do so, and for whom?

Decolonizing Methodologies and Knowledge — an anticolonial critique in settler Québec, Canada

This thesis contributes to a contemporary shared idea of contestation and revision of the nature, appearance, and structure of museums by interrogating the affects and effects of architecture and design in processes of the production, interpretation, and representation of knowledge about "othered" and colonized cultures in regional and national fine arts museum. To do so, I frame my overall analysis of the MMFA Bourgie pavilion's exhibition space and architecture with Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh's theoretical frameworks of decoloniality in/as praxis, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's decolonizing methodologies, and Patrick Wolfe and Lorenzo Veracini's settler colonial theory (SCT).

More precisely, I refer to Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith's seminal book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* first published in 1999 with reprints in 2013 and 2021, and to professors Walter Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh's co-edited book *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (2018). While the former focus on critical research methodologies for and about Indigenous peoples and communities, the latter explores the hidden forces of the modernity/coloniality axis and proposes decoloniality as praxis. I see both approaches as complementary. Writing at the turn of the century, Smith reflects on the traumatic collective memory of imperialism and its impacts on the collection, classification, representation, and consumption of Indigenous knowledges, peoples, and cultural and artistic productions. Approaching research "as a significant site of struggle,"[20] Smith explores the participation of scholarly and cultural institutions in the construction, subjugation, and assimilation of the Other.[21]

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[20] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "Introduction," *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed, 2021): 2.

[21] "In other words, research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions." Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 5.

Research is thus never neutral nor objective, but always at risk of dehumanizing and objectifying the Other in its processes of constructing and sharing knowledge and information. It is intricately social, political, cultural, and personal, and deeply aligned with modernity, its desire for scientific classification, and its imperative for and of progress. This is not to say that we should abstain from research though. A significant part of decolonization and a decolonizing framework, Smith argues, is to revisit history and to take "apart the story, revealing the underlying texts,"[22] to emphasize alternative stories, voices, perspectives, and representations, which hold high importance in crafting impressions of the truth.[23] Similarly, Mignolo and Walsh locate coloniality in the constitution of modernity and argue that decoloniality "is not a new paradigm or mode of critical thought. It is a way, option, standpoint, analytic, project, practice, and praxis."[24] Concerned both with "decoloniality how" and "decoloniality for," they foreground their concept as a praxis "to make visible, open up, and advance radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis, and thought."[25] As such, decoloniality expands beyond theory to denote ways of thinking, knowing, being, and doing otherwise. It is a practice of thinking with and not simply about those who live the colonial difference, to investigate the cracks within and to interrupt "structures that are clearly intertwined with and constitutive of global capitalism and Western."[26] Building on each other, Smith's decolonizing methodologies and Mignolo and Walsh's decoloniality as praxis urge us to think about the construction and representation of knowledge relationally and critically, and to consider the colonial origins of research as a violent system for organizing, collecting, re-arranging and re-

[22] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 3.
[23] "Representation is important as a concept because it gives the impression of 'the truth'." Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 35.
[24] Walter Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, "Introduction," *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018): 5.
[25] *Ibid*., 17.
[26] *Ibid*.

presenting knowledge.[27] Answering their call for alternative modes of thinking, theorizing, and doing, I investigate the affective and sensorial effects and underlying narrative of the floor's spatial organization, architecture, and design, moving away from the supremacy of the visual and the privileging of language, to the experiential and lived experience.

This approach requires attending to Canada's settler colonial socio-cultural, historical and political specificities, here specifically in regard to the context surrounding the examined architecture and design, as related to the meaning of spaces and the power relations being continuously negotiated within them. A larger ideological structure impacting contemporary socio-cultural circumstances and understanding, settler colonialism is a mode of domination primarily concerned with the land as a resource, instead of people and labour. Different from colonialism, it invokes the settlement of estranged communities on Indigenous lands through the displacement and elimination of Indigenous peoples.[28] Outsiders mean to achieve control of the land by claiming it as their own. In other words, the spatial and territorial nature of settler colonialism is directed toward occupation and reproduction in the place of the other, the indigenous.[29] This disposability and dispensability of Indigenous bodies and population reaffirms not only their redundancy in the settler colonial project but also supports what scholar Lorenzo Veracini defines as a logic of elimination bolstered by a principle of assimilation by containment and dispossession.[30] In fact, settler colonialism persists in the continuous and ongoing elimination of Indigenous communities and the assertion of state sovereignty and control over their lands. Following scholar Patrick

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[27] "The globalization of knowledge and Western culture constantly reaffirms the West's view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of 'civilized' knowledge." Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* 63.
[28] Lorenzo Veracini, "Containment, Elimination, Endogeneity: Settler Colonialism in the Global Present," in *Rethinking Marxism 31*, no. 1 (April 2019): 121.
[29] *Ibid*., 122.
[30] Lorenzo Veracini, "Containment, Elimination, Endogeneity: Settler Colonialism in the Global Present," *Rethinking Marxism 31*, no. 1 (April 2019): 121.

Wolfe's invitation for examining settler colonial structures as part of contemporary everyday life and expanding on his statement that "the settler invasion is a structure, not an event,"[31] Veracini establishes that settler colonialism is a mode of domination that has gone global and is ongoing. Settler colonial theory (SCT), as approached by Lorenzo Veracini, offers an unprecedented view of "the stories settlers tell themselves and about themselves"[32]. Similar to Linda Tuhiwai Smith's decolonizing methodologies, SCT examines the entwinement of institutions, knowledges, socio-cultural identities, and social narratives in perpetuating structures of settler colonialism. Veracini's explanations of settler colonialism's logic of elimination and containment, and his emphasis on space—physical and symbolic—inform both previous discussions of settler colonial narrative and current investigations of museums' design and architecture as an environment for narrative making. He repeatedly comments on the importance of assimilation, naturalization of authority, and settler narrative accessibility, and their impact in shaping perception and subsequent political and social actions. His insightful discussions offer a critical perspective on the analysis of museum framing and spatial organization of colonized cultures and art. As a theoretical framework informing a larger decolonial critical/analytical approach, SCT participates in locating the instances and design of a global settler colonial present in urban architecture and socio-cultural narratives expressed in museum spaces. In particular, Veracini's attention to space and place critically informs my analysis of the design and architecture of the Inuit art exhibition. I combine decolonial methodologies and SCT to foreground the intricate and fundamental relationship between the socio-cultural, political, and spatial, paying particular attention to the ways in which colonialism, and more specifically

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[31] Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: Cassell, 1999): 163 cited in Lorenzo Veracini, "Containment, Elimination, Endogeneity: Settler Colonialism in the Global Present", 118.

[32] Lorenzo Veracini, "Narrative," *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010): 103.

Canada's settler colonialism, is being continuously reproduced and reactivated in the CMB pavilion's architecture, design, and organization of space.[33]

The first section provides a blueprint of the space under study in the form of a structural walking tour of the exhibition space and its pavilion, locating the building within the MMFA district and Montreal's Golden Square Mile neighborhood. This introduction to and of the space draws on Bill Hillier's notion of space syntax, Sophia Psarra's discussion on architecture and narrative, and Kali Tzorti's spatial organization in museums. The second section explores the affective and relational quality of the space and its experiential impetus. It focuses on the affective encounters and phenomenological experiences offered and allowed by the pavilion and its fourth-floor exhibition space. This section further analyzes the spatial organization of the CMB pavilion's top floor and the relations between its design and architecture and the mobility and movements of bodies within the space. Taking the form of a phenomenological stroll, it is informed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and important research on the interactivity of the senses and their role in art and design.[34] This affective and relational approach is subjective and grounded in

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[33] As I attempt to critically analyze the affects and effects of architecture and design of the MMFA Inuit art exhibition space through a decolonial and settler colonial lens, I am aware of the strengths and limitations of both approaches when used to interrogate settler colonial structures and from a settler colonial position. As Alissa Macoun and Elizabeth Strakosch reflect, "Settler colonial theory (SCT) remains a largely White attempt to think through contemporary colonial relationships." (Alissa Macoun and Elizabeth Strakosch, "The Ethical Demands of Settler Colonial Theory," *Settler Colonial Studies 3*, no. 3–4 [2013]: 426.) It is important to mention that while this theoretical framework seeks to disturb colonial hierarchies and to contribute to Indigenous political struggles in "exposing colonization as 'a structure not an event'" and the similarities and intimacies between colonialism and settler practices, knowledge, and institutions, it still risks reifying settler colonial structure and political relationships "as inevitable and unchanging." (*Ibid*., 427) Macoun and Strakosch thus suggest "that while settler ways of thinking structure and dominate much of our contemporary reality, they are not equivalent to it." (*Ibid*.) In fact, the core strength of SCT is its ability to make visible its frames of reference and consequently open to possibilities and perspectives outside them. This position aligns with the purpose of this thesis, which addresses settler-colonial institutional structures framing Canada and Quebec's sociocultural knowledge and commenting on their shortcomings and discrepancies in the representation of the multiplicity of lived realities, from a distinctively settler-colonial perspective.

[34] The research I am referring to includes the scholarly works of David Howes, Mikel Bille and Tim Flohr Sørensen in *Senses and Sensation: Critical and Primary* Sources, vol. 4, *Art and Design* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018) as well as writings by architect Juhani Pallasmaa, mainly in *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, 3rd ed. (John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2012). Although most scholars are concerned with architecture or spaces designed with the senses in mind, my research consists in approaching the space on the fourth floor through the senses and engaging with their

personal experiences, yet it finds resonance in the ways in which the space is organized, allowing or denying access to, and (dis)orienting bodies differently. This approach foregrounds considerations of the impacts and influences of the sociocultural and political climate on the visitors' experience of the space and their reception of what is being presented and how.[35] Looking back to the research and analysis carried out in the first two sections, the third and final section addresses the presences and absences within the space under study, providing preliminary answers to the questions I ask in the introduction. It draws on Kim Dovey's discussion of making place and his theory of assemblage as well as Lisa Cooke's anthropological interrogation of the "North" in contemporary Canadian national and cultural imaginaries. Informing my investigation of the pavilion architecture, design, spatial experiences, and its representation of Quebec, Canadian, and Inuit art, culture, and history, their insights support my arguments for a problematic display and design of Inuit art and its integration to Canadian and Quebec art and socio-cultural histories. This final section invites us to think critically about the discursive spatiality of museums and their sociocultural responsibilities in the representation of Inuit culture and history.

omnipresent influence on its experience. I want to mention that the space I am looking at was not designed to integrate or engage with the senses. My approach, phenomenological, reacts to elements of design "after the fact" and interrogates sensorial reactions bolstered by architecture and design that may not have been intended.

[35] This approach is based on Henri Lefebvre's understanding of space as a relational entity, a social product, and a practice. As discussed by Laura Hourston Hanks, Jonathan Hale, and Suzanne MacLeod, it builds on a shared awareness of museums as integrated narrative environments, (re) presenting "a fully embodied experience of objects and media in three-dimensional space". Suzanne Macleod et al., *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions* [Oxon: Routledge, 2012]: xxi.

Section 1—Art and Architecture: Structural narrative

This first chapter is concerned with how the CMB pavilion architecturally orders the spaces of exhibitions on its top floor. The theories presented in this section lay the ground for understanding how curatorial and museological discourses are expressed in space and examine the role of architecture in structuring spaces and their narratives. Considering spatial structure as an important variable of museum experiences, the emphasis of this chapter on architecture questions the relation between space and society and reflects on the influence of space beyond framing an organization of knowledge: contributing to affect a message in its own right. Taking the form of an architectural promenade, my approach seeks to be objective yet critical in presenting relations between the building and its physical and social contexts and drawing connections between the location of the building, the pavilion itself, and the space it structures. To that end, I rely on the architect, urbanist, and theorist Bill Hillier's configuration of space syntax, and more specifically its adaptation to the museum's organization of space through architecture by museum scholar Kali Tzortzi.

The heart of the Golden Square Mile,[36] downtown Montreal, at the foot of Mount Royal Mountain, is where the MMFA has called home since 1912.[37] Montreal's iconic landmark and bourgeois Victorian eclectic revival-style mountainside baronial mansions and historic public buildings tower over the Museum District, which not only houses the MMFA, but extends to The Guild, the McCord Stewart Museum, and the Redpath Museum. At the intersection of Sherbrooke Street and Museum Avenue stand the Michal and Renata Hornstein Pavilion, built in 1912 in the

[36] The name of this neighborhood comes from the area's economic and commercial prosperity. It was established in the late 18th century as a downtown homestead before becoming "the seat of impressive wealth," its resident included owners and operators of Canadian rail, mining, timber, fur, and banking companies. The neighborhood has precise borders measuring about a square mile. Richard Burnett, "If it glitters, it's Montréal's Golden Square Mile," MTL, last modified September 2, 2022, https://www.mtl.org/en/experience/golden-square-mile

[37] Tanya Southcott, "Art History 101," *Canadian Architects 58*, no. 2, (2013): 12.

Beaux-Arts style of architecture and the first major extension by and for the Art Association of Montreal, the Jean-Noel Desmarais Pavilion (1991) by renowned architect Moshe Safdie, and the Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, with its interesting integration and restoration of the neo-Romanesque Richardsonian 1894 Erskine and American Church [Figure 5].[38] The juxtaposition of the pavilions reveals the multiple dialogues initiated by the CMB Pavilion's architecture with the museum complex, the city, the church, and their past and present histories. The Pavilion's four storeys' sleek geometric marbled and glass façade utilizes blocks from the same quarry as the ones used for the Michal and Renata Hornstein and Jean-Noël Desmarais pavilions; visually and materially relating the building to the museum complex and its history.[39] Moreover, the pavilion's ribbon windows, and a glassed-in atrium on the top floor, offers multiple and uninterrupted views of the city. The Pavilion has been integrated to the Erskine and American United Church and was built where the Erskine and American United Church's Sunday school once stood. More than physically sharing space and structure with the church, it emulates it's aura by mimicking its architectural and ideological elevation, enacted through the skylight and high ceilings of the top floor, as well as integrating vast and open rest areas around its exhibition spaces, alluding to religious alcoves: spaces of and for reflection and contemplation [Figures 6–7].[40] More than an aesthetic commentary, attention to the church and its integration into the museum complex also underlines its long and intertwined history with the MMFA: "its former congregation sharing class and ethnic identities with the founding figures of the Art Association of Montreal, the precursor to

[38] The restored 19th-century Romanesque Revival Church's façade remains largely unchanged, yet now houses the Bourgie Concert Hall, a result of the monetary contribution of Pierre Bourgie, businessman, philanthropist, and music patron, to the project.
[39] "Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion of Québec and Canadian Art—Montreal Museum of Fine Arts", Provencher Roy, last modified 2023, https://provencherroy.ca/en/projects/mmfa-claire-and-marc-bourgie-pavilion-of-quebec-and-canadian-art/
[40] *Ibid*.

the MMFA."[41] The building boldly aims to connect and cohere different historical and cultural elements as well as values through its exterior architecture, working through and with the project's physical and visual limitations of integrating a neo-Romanesque church into a contemporary structure.[42]

The original plan of the new building included an entrance at the street level, on Sherbrooke Street. However, since fall 2012, "all of the MMFA's pavilions are accessible only through the Museum's main entrance in the Desmarais Pavilion, meaning that the entry to the Bourgie Pavilion is through the lower galleries at the junction of the Hornstein and Desmarais buildings."[43] This diversion from the original plans affects the experience of the art collections exhibited in the Bourgie pavilion and reinforces a distinctively linear and fixed mode of reading the displays. The pavilion is organized on a vertical axis, moving away from the museum's traditional horizontality and reckoning with the physical constraints on the site. As Anne Whitelaw aptly noted, "the Bourgie Pavilion disrupts viewers' expectations by replacing spectatorial flow from room to room with self-contained galleries."[44] Accommodating a very small footprint, the CMB building requires visitors to move vertically from one historical microcosm to another. This verticality is emphasized

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[41] Anne Whitelaw, "A New Pavilion for Quebec and Canadian Art at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts," *Journal of Canadian Art History 34*, no. 1 (2013): 167.

[42] In other words, the limitations of integrating a smooth and polished contemporary structure into a Richardsonian century-old church in a historic neighborhood, home to Montreal's anglophone elite and wealthy families and their heritage, as well as the spatial and physical restrictions associated with the location. The museum was not allowed to build a new wing whose height would exceed the church's roof so as to not impair the view. Additionally, they had to abide by the previous site occupied by the church and its Sunday school. In a lettre to the President of the comity of the apartments Le Château, then M. Pierre Brousseau, M. Bernard Lamarre reacts: "En tenant compte spécifiquement de vos démarches et des demandes de certains de vos résidants nous avons avec nos architectes, dans le souci de conciliation, révisé le concept de la partie muséale du projet. Très concrètement le musée consentirait à en réduire quelque peu la hauteur ce qui entraînerait un impact important sur les cinq niveaux de la nouvelle partie. Cette approche nous obligera à réduire les hauteurs des cinq salles d'exposition, particulièrement le dernier étage, soit le niveau 4. Ce geste impliquerait des réductions d'espaces d'accrochage qui étaient déjà très limitées considérant les contraintes de conservation de l'église Erskine and American." Bernard Lamarre, "Projet du pavillon d'art canadien – Église Erskine and American," official lettre, June 15, 2007.

[43] Anne Whitelaw, "A New Pavilion for Quebec and Canadian Art," 167.

[44] *Ibid*.

by the exterior architecture which evokes a series of boxes stacked on one another, another expression of the pavilion's singular and contained organization of space. The location's spatial restrictions further constrained the hanging of the museum's collection, having notable effects on the MMFA's presentation of Quebec and Canadian art and cultural history, and consequently, I argue, on the visitors' interpretation and reception of this narrative.

The access to the Bourgie pavilion and its provincial and national art collections is found two storeys below ground, past Moshe Safdie's infamous stairs,[45] and past the MMFA's contemporary art collection and spaces for temporary exhibitions, underneath Sherbrooke Street. It consists in a wide and sinuous tunnel on the right that displays large canvases painted with bright colours. At its entry, a large label on the side wall presents the CMB Pavilion and its Level S2 exhibition *Expanding Fields* displaying artworks by Quebec and Canadian artists from 1960 to 1980 [Figure 8].

The pavilion is organized according to an inverted chronology: from previous contemporary displays of the Desmarais pavilion the lower levels reconstruct modern periods while ascending floors retrace earlier historical moments [Figure 9]. Despite this inversion, the museum endorses a linear and chronological experience of its exhibitions, moving up and then down, encouraging visitors to take the stairs or the elevators up to the fourth floor, beginning their journey in Quebec and Canadian art history with the modern and contemporary Inuit art exhibition. As stated on the MMFA's website:

[45] An intentional intervention on an often-forgotten architectural detail, the stairs here proclaim one's entry into the institution of the museum, acting as a threshold between the busy movement of the city streets and the silent contemplation of art.

> This heritage collection presents some six hundred works chronologically, from the top level downwards, within a gallery layout conceived by designer Daniel Castonguay. Each of the pavilion's six levels spotlights a historical period in a distinctive way, now providing, for the first time, a more in-depth understanding and appreciation of Quebec and Canadian art.[46]

There is a physical, structural, and conceptual tension between the primary experience of the space and that which is intended by the institution. Yet, both approaches to and of the space reveal a conflicting narrative of Quebec and Canada's cultural heritage and integrated representation of Inuit art within this history and architecture. The museum staff recommends beginning this historical journey on the fourth floor where the museum presents its Inuit art collection titled "*Takuminartut*: Contemporary Inuit Art, 1948-present."[47] This title has been coined by the local cultural community of Inukjuak, north of Nunavik, to designate Inuit art and underscores its beauty and emotional appeal. More importantly, its integration in the title of the exhibition demonstrates the museum's attempts to give some cultural autonomy to the community from which many items were acquired.[48] It moreover hints at the collaboration of Louis Gagnon, director of the museology department at Avataq Cultural Institute (Avataq), in the curation of the

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[46] "Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion", Montreal Museum of Fine Art.

[47] The introductory wall text informs visitors that this title has been "recently coined to designate Inuit works of art … [meaning] that they are so beautiful and possess such an emotional appeal that one wants to look at them over and over again" (Erika Davis, "You Really Shouldn't Have: A Critique of the Gift Shop's Exemption from Cultural Education," *Canadian Content* 7 [Spring 2015]: 63.) More importantly, it is a term that has been developed by the local community of Inukjuak, north of Nunavik, which supports the curators' preliminary aim for the exhibition to celebrate the contemporaneity and the agency "of Inuit art both in terms of the genesis of its production as art in the late 1940s, and as a reflection of the place of expressive culture in the everyday life of Inuit to the present." (Anne Whitelaw, "A New Pavilion for Quebec and Canadian Art," 169–170.)

[48] Erika Davis, "You Really Shouldn't Have," 62.

collection.[49] Founded in 1980 in Inukjuak, Avataq offers programs and services geared towards the support, promotion, and preservation of Inuit language, heritage, and culture for present and future generations.[50] The wall text explains the curation of Inuit art not by regions or chronology but "to show the Inuit impulse at the centre of these series of representations" as it reads.[51] While assuming an "Inuit impulse" invalidates the artistic potential of Inuit artists, attributing talent to impulse, in a primitivizing way, the wall text attests to the curator's and Avataq representant's effort to create distance from the ethnographic collections characterizing Inuit art displays for decades.

The space of the fourth floor, also known as "l'Espace Hydro-Québec",[52] is separated into three sections: a hall and two exhibition spaces. The first exhibition stands at the back of the space and displays the MMFA Inuit art collection [Figure 10]. The second space of exhibition is located underneath the glassed-in atrium and skylight. The hall, or rest area, houses the elevators and the staircase. It is characterized by floor-to-ceiling ribbon windows that directly face the elevators and the stairs and which command a view extending beyond the roofs of the neighboring pavilions further down Sherbrooke West Street. They extend the length of the front and left walls to further offer glances of the main entrance and of the sculpture garden [Figures 2–4]. Leather couches are

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[49] « Institut culturel Avataq, » *Société des musées du Québec*, (2017), https://www.musees.qc.ca/fr/professionnel/activites-publications/info-muse/repertoire-collectionnement/institut-culturel-avataq

[50] Avataq Cultural Institute, "About us," Avataq, n.d., https://www.avataq.qc.ca/en/Institute/About-us

[51] Erika Davis, "You Really Shouldn't Have," 62.

[52] As per an agreement signed in 2008, Hydro-Québec is the sole and main sponsor of the new pavilion, especially its fourth floor, having contributed 2 million dollars to the project. "Attendu que le MBAM présentera au Niveau 4 de ce nouveau pavillon des collections consacrées principalement à l'art historique et contemporain inuit (ci-après appelé « Niveau 4 ») ainsi que des événements à caractère public, à l'avant de la surface d'exposition, qui sera utilisé pour des fins de réception et dont la promotion sera faite sous le nom de Espace Hydro-Québec, (ci-après appelé Espace) ;". Danielle Champagne, « Entente entre le Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal et Hydro-Québec, » avril 2008, 1. This agreement also mentions that the MMFA commits to preserving the image and identity of Hydro-Québec. I can only presume of the socio-political and cultural implications and repercussions of such agreement in the final design and organization of the fourth-floor space. However, it attests to the MMFA's distancing from Inuit art, and subsequent lack of care, and the multiplication of the space's intentions, not solely focus on the display and promotion of Inuit art, in stark contrast to the other exhibitions spaces.

positioned in front of the elevators and besides the staircase, inviting the contemplation of the glass-framed cityscape [Figure 4]. This area also houses two concrete pillars supporting the geometric and intricate ceiling steel structure fracturing views of the sky. A slight compression of space between the elevators and the staircase indicates a pathway to an impressive view of the city's elite neighborhood and its famous "mountain" [Figure 4]. The atrium, a geometric, triangular dome, extends far onto the ceiling, ending at the edges of a heavy concrete beam below which a black ceiling forms a dark alcove housing an intriguing play of shadows and three Inuit sculptures in the form of human figures and busts welcoming visitors to the space [Figure 12]. A fourth sculpture stands alone on a pedestal besides the glassed-in atrium. Massive inclined white panels shelter the exhibition on display, accessible only through a narrow, lightly hidden, and dark entrance [Figures 11, 14].[53] Despite the necessary protection from daylight for the conservation of the artworks displayed, the architecture and design of the Inuit exhibition's entrance creates a deep and stark contrast from this light-filled open space to the dark, cramped interior [Figure 15]. Dim dome lighting spotlights a selection of Inuit artworks, predominantly sculptures, positioned in glass cases angled in the middle of the room and fixed alongside two dark blue walls, installed at chest height, favouring a downward gaze [Figures 16–17]. These industrial-looking glass displays order carved representations of Inuit activities on the land, maternity, spirituality, and an array of animals, respectively. A few prints are hung on the left back white wall beside bathroom doors and a dedication of the space to Hydro-Québec [Figure 20].[54] An artwork by white settler artist Shary

[53] Anne Whitelaw, "A New Pavilion for Quebec and Canadian Art," 169.

[54] Hydro-Québec is one of the most important hydroelectricity suppliers in the world. In Canada, the public service society is also an important art patron, supporting an ever-underfinanced cultural milieu. However, Hydro-Québec's territorial exploitation, manipulation, and use of water resources and the availabilities of its services are deeply anchored in colonization processes. Hydro-Québec's active participation in Canada's extractive industry disparately affects Indigenous populations and the land. It favors services to the South, leaving many Indigenous communities in the dark, and impacts the ecosystems upon which they rely. Despite the public society's important financial support of the art world, its presence in the Inuit art exhibition space sits uneasily with the colonial, economic, and ecologic exploitation of Indigenous lands and communities. Its logo, towering above the space, overshadows Inuit art; a

Boyle – who has collaborated with Inuit artists previously on a number of projects, but not on this work specifically - is presented at the left-hand side of the room, immediately beside the inclined panels, encased in a glass display [Figure 21]. Titled "Sea Change" (2015), Boyle's sculptural work present the mythical figure of Sedna, the Inuit goddess of the arctic sea, looking upward as three figures on a tiny boat cross her aquatic dominion. The characters are recognizable as representatives of the Canadian government, the Hudson's Bay Company and the Jesuit missionaries. The artist's work attests to the forces which radically and abruptly changed Inuit ways of life while addressing in passing the dire effects of climate change in the arctic as Canada's colonial legacy.[55] It is important to not that this is the only non-Inuit artwork inclusion in the collection.[56]

The Inuit art exhibition is found at the end of a vast and luminous path through the pavilion, the bright, spacious and airy effect co-created by the glassed-in atrium, geometric skylight and white wall [Figure 11]. Moving across the fourth floor, the space feels expansive; this feeling is suddenly compressed inside the Inuit art exhibition, which is almost hidden behind the large exterior wall panels. The space inside is dimly lit, limited and cramped, restricting visitors' movements and impairing careful observation and contemplation of works which requires visibility, space and time. Such spatial organization architecturally contests the claim of the exhibition which declares the museum's intention to foreground the contemporaneity of Inuit art and speak of the cultural value and place of art in Inuit culture, and by extension, the importance

muted presence continuously reaffirming colonial dominance and supremacy over the North. See Didier Morelli, "J'aime Hydro ?" *Espace 128* (2021): 30–37.

[55] Shary Boyle, "Sea Change," Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. https://www.mbam.qc.ca/en/works/70364/

[56] On the third and second floor, visitors can find contemporary Indigenous contributions amidst settler Canadians' art from the 1700s to the 1930s. These additions were made with the intent of filling important and critical gaps in Canada's and Quebec's history that silenced and left out Indigenous presence or artistic practices. The installation by Shary Boyle on the fourth floor reverses this dialogue by investing the space for Inuit art through her white settler presence. However, this addition fails to contextualize or critique settler-colonial presence and history in the North. Although her work is extremely critical and hints at the violence enacted by settlers on Inuit communities and ways of life, it stands apart in the space of the exhibition, disengaged from the Inuit art collection and its history.

of Inuit art to Quebec and Canada.[57] Relegated to the back end of the floor space, the MMFA exhibition of Inuit art, dedicated to Inuit modern and contemporary cultural production, is awkwardly structurally situated. This odd spatial organization, I contend, reveals the dominance of architecture over the space and its inhabitants. Imposing, the architecture on the fourth floor does not take into consideration the history and identity of the culture which occupies the space; instead, it takes over the space, its experience and its narratives. As a result, the exhibition space and its subject, Inuit art and culture, is physically and conceptually removed. Displaying Inuit art, it problematically presents modern and contemporary art history as a historical point of origin in the museum's linear (re) telling of Canada and Quebec's history. A syntactic analysis of this space, and of its relation to the pavilion and the museum district, offers meaningful insights into such a location as well as the role upheld by architecture and design and their sociocultural implications in the experience and narration of such display.

In her 2015 book *Museum Space*, Kali Tzortzi seeks to understand and analyze, "how space interacts with museological discourse and how curatorial intent can be expressed in space."[58] Building on research by Bill Hillier, John Peponis, and Sophia Psarra, Tzortzi details a method of syntactic analysis that examines museums' spatial organization, in its architectural materialization, and configurations of circulation and movements in and allowed by spaces. Investigating how arrangements of space in sequences relate to visitors' experience of museum galleries and the workings of the museum as a social space, she discusses recurring concepts of circulation.[59] She

[57] "*Takuminartut*: Contemporary Inuit art, 1948-present," Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, Montreal, 2011–2023.
[58] Kali Tzortzi, "Introduction," *Museum Space: Where Architecture Meets Museology* (London: Routledge, 2015): 3.
[59] "Specific issues associated with circulation are addressed in the literature, centering on four key themes: how the arrangement of space into sequences relates to the way people move around and explore galleries, to the ease of legibility, or intelligibility, of the layout, to the viewing of objects, and to the way the museum works as a social space." Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space,* 86.

addresses four concepts: single sequence of spaces, variations in the single sequence, matrix circulation pattern, and free plan circulation.[60] Following her discussion, I determined that the Bourgie Pavilion is organized according to a single sequence of spaces or viewing order of objects—in this case, more specifically, exhibitions—with some variations in the sequence.[61] Indeed, it is organized chronologically and provides a linear, albeit reversed, progression of Canadian and Quebec art history, each floor acting as a microcosm of a particular period. Variations are made possible by the presence of stairs and elevators on each floor which technically allow visitors to move between historical periods as they wish. Yet, the vertical axis of the building and the enclosed and compact floor spaces explicitly favour two main single sequences, or a single sequence with a variation: down-up, and up-down. In spatial analysis, as explained by Tzortzi, a single sequence, with variations, evokes continuity and seriality comparatively to the notion of choice characterizing a matrix circulation pattern, where spaces are branching out from the main axis, allowing for equal alternative routes, and in contrast to a free plan circulation offering interconnected routes between spaces, and thus a multiplicity of narratives.[62] A single sequence space layout on a rectangular ground plan supports and reinforces the intended curatorial discourse and maximize external and institutional control over the movement of visitors.[63] In this case, the time periods presented are autonomous, clearly separated from one another, and meant to be read and interpreted on their own; building blocks of Quebec and Canada history, constituent of the

[60] *Ibid*., 86.
[61] However, one could argue it is a matrix circulation pattern—to that I would answer that all paths are neither equally accessible nor connected. A matrix path would require more effort from the visitors than the variations of the single sequence proposed by the MMFA.
[62] "The single sequence remained the dominant principle until the nineteenth century, often closely linked to the chronological view of the history of art, and has been repeatedly adopted since." Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space*, 86–87.
[63] "Brawne explained: Our experience of an exhibition is … always some kind of a mosaic built up in our minds as the result of serial viewing: it is after all impossible to comprehend a whole museum or even the exhibits within one space at a glance. This is fundamental to the museum design and gallery spaces." *Ibid*., 87.

province and nation's modernity. While the sequential variations offered by the different points of access along the vertical axis of the building do allow for a reading across temporal divisions, such reading is limited by the structure of the total and individual floor space and the absence of visual connection between the exhibitions.[64] Moreover, scholars such as Michael Brawne, Sophia Psarra, Sharon Macdonald, Francesca Monti, and Suzanne Keene note that moving against the linearity of both building and museological discourses to re-order spatial, and art historical experience in this case, requires an added effort from visitors which lowers the possibility of the experience of multiple narratives and interpretations of histories. This reinforces the linearity and chronology of the art histories on display which misplaces Inuit art by spatially positioning its collection before the "Founding Identities (1700s-1870s)" despite the collection's modern and contemporary nature. Not only does this structural decision disrupts the pavilion's chronology, but it also supports a false idea that Inuit artistic practices are a thing of the past.

Similarly, most floors adopt a simple single sequence space plan. In fact, almost all of the Canadian and Quebec art pavilion's exhibition spaces are open spaces that unfold in a linear and premeditated fashion. Visitors see most, if not all, of the artworks on display upon entering the different floor spaces, visually guiding them along their sequences.[65] Interestingly, this pattern is not reproduced on the fourth floor where the architecture and design conceal the majority of the artworks, except for five Inuit sculptures found in odd corners, decoratively out of context. As a

[64] Space syntax is the careful observation and monitoring of the influence of architecture and spatial organization on the natural movements of individuals. Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space*, 192–193. Controlled visual fields and self-contained displays encourage visitors to focus and links already set up between the works result in a high degree of control. When attending to the attention given to the overall structure and the organization of visitable sequences, it can be determined that the spatial sequence is marked by order where, therefore, spatial properties are functional ends in themselves.

[65] Exception to the rule, Level S1 "The Age of the Manifesto," spanning works from the 1940s to 1960, and Level 1 "Towards Modernism," from 1930s to 1940, propose a pattern of movements more akin to a matrix circulation plan presenting different rooms within the space with different access points. Nevertheless, the majority of the artworks are visually accessible reiterating their value and that of the display.

result, the exhibition is visually and in experience detached from the whole single sequence of viewing of the pavilion. A dead end, half-hidden stop, on the journey through Canadian and Quebec's art history.

Spatial Syntactic

Space syntax is a consideration of spatial configurations, and forms of layouts, as systems of connection and communication.[66] Addressing patterns of movement by visitors and buildings' configuration of circulation, facilitated or restricted by architecture and design, further reveals spaces' intelligibility and accessibility. The transmission of knowledge through and transposed in space rely on the boundaries between content as visibility between spaces and the concept of *"framing"* expressed in spatial sequencing.[67] A space's circulation, allowed and informed by its structure and organization, acts as a hypertext framing what is being presented and helping to navigate its content. Moreover, the architecture and design of the space influence and co-create its social experience as they affect the level of co-awareness and presence of and between visitors.[68] This understanding enriches an analysis of the museum as an experience of both the objects on display and also of other people: therefore deeply historical, as well as cultural and social.[69] It equally highlights the role of the museum layout as a pedagogical device.[70] As Kali Tzortzi mentions, "[t] he system of spatial connections affects the way people move in space, and in the case of museums, this also means the way they can explore and understand them."[71] Spatial organization is closely tied to the communication and interpretation of knowledge classified within

[66] Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space*, 89–91.
[67] *Ibid*., 93.
[68] *Ibid*., 90–91; 100–102.
[69] *Ibid*., 93.
[70] *Ibid*., 95.
[71] *Ibid*., 104.

and by the space. In other words, it is not only the objects themselves and their organization that inform their meaning and reception but also the space in which they are displayed.

By making the spatial properties of museums clear, spatial analysis allows for a consistent interpretation of spatial and display layouts.[72] The design, spatial, and architectural aspects that inform and co-construct these patterns of movement and encounters are predicated on elements such as depth and access, spatial devices (building sections, edges or spatial elements acting as boundaries, landmarks or visual elements and points of reference), connectivity or relationships between spaces, as well as lines or axes of sight and visual fields.[73] In her configurational analysis, Tzortzi indexes four space types, identifying each space in terms of how it is embedded in the layout; a-space, 1-connected, meaning a dead end with no movement through possible, b-space, "not a dead-end space, but on the way to a dead end, so all movement through" must go back the same way, c-space is at least 2-connected, "by implication, it has one alternative way back," and d-space, which is more than 2-connected meaning that there is more than one alternative way back.[74] She notes, "[t] he more *a-spaces* in a layout, the more dead ends; the more *b-spaces*, the more sequences where visitors must return the same way; the more *c-spaces*, the more routes will form sequences which allow continuous forward movement; the more *d-spaces*, the more choices which allow different routes."[75] These are important to consider because it was found that the layout of displays and the location of objects defined the direction of visitor flow, and that "'*objects in segregated areas risk being overlooked because circulation to less integrated spaces is generally*

[72] Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space,* 109.
[73] *Ibid*., 88–108. Districts are building sections, separate and visual units, and divisions. Edges are spatial elements acting as boundaries, marking distinctions between parts. Landmarks are visual elements or points of reference (i.e. views from the outside).
[74] *Ibid*., 105.
[75] *Ibid*., 105.

limited'."[76] [Authors' italics] This emphasizes the importance of the recognition of spatial organization as a museological device influencing the reception and interpretation of artworks, supporting or contradicting curatorial intentions.[77] This identification of spaces also speaks directly to spatial concepts of depth and connectivity, or relationality, of a layout. These can be quantified and inform of spaces' accessibility and sociability. In other words, the depth and connectivity of a space inform its importance and that of its display, in the case of museums, in the overarching curatorial narrative. Depth is a syntactic measure of distance that quantifies the relations between each space and others. Topological, it is concerned with how many spaces one must go through to access another and others and determines if a space is "integrated" (easily accessible) or "segregated" (difficult to access).[78] Associated with the concept of depth is the measure of connectivity which determines the degree of accessibility of space; "it indexes the number of direct connections from a space (that is, with how many spaces it communicates directly), and so serves as a local measure of connection."[79] These two concepts deeply informed one another as a highly connected space will usually be more easily accessible, and the least connected will be the least accessible or the more distant. In order to determine the depth value of the spaces in the layout of the CMB pavilion in relation to each other and to the whole museum district, I marked all spaces according to their topological distance from two selected entry points (0): the Level S2 exhibition of the CMB pavilion and the museum complex's main entrance in the Desmarais pavilion.[80] I then

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[76] Francesca Monti and Suzanne Keene, *Museums and Silent Objects: designing effective exhibitions*, (Farhnam: Ashagate, 2013,): 243) cited in Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space,* 101.

[77] "So space which appears similar to each other geometrically and metrically, can be differentiated in terms of how they form layouts as systems of connections. The system of spatial connections affects the way people move in space, and in the case of museums, this also means the way they can explore and understand them." Francesca Monti and Suzanne Keene, *Museums and Silent Objects: designing effective exhibitions*, (Farhnam: Ashagate, 2013,): 243) cited in Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space,* 104.

[78] It is a "function of the pattern of relations between each space in the layout and all the others." *Ibid*., 106.

[79] Connected with both measures of depth and the connection is the syntactic measure of control which concerns the relationships of spaces to their immediate neighbors. "[A] space has a high control value when it is connected directly with many other spaces which have fewer alternative connections." *Ibid*.

[80] Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space,* 107.

added each value of the numbered spaces to determine their depth: i.e. to determine the depth of a space numbered 3, I will add 0 + 1 + 2 + 3. The result of this addition, 6, is the value of depth of the space. The higher the value of depth, the more segregated a space, the less connected to others, and the harder to find; accordingly, the lower the depth value, the more connected and therefore integrated a space is, having a higher probability of being used by visitors.[81] A configurational analysis of the CMB pavilion reveals that the building, in relation to the museum district and its spatial organization, has a high total depth value. Indeed, from its entrance, Level S2 exhibition "Expanding Fields" (1960–1980), to its top floor, the Bourgie pavilion has a total depth value of 15. The depth value is not a definitive measure of the space's accessibility. However, if we compare this value to the depth of access of the other buildings in the museum district, it becomes apparent that the CMB pavilion is the most segregated pavilion. From the main entrance, its top-floor exhibition has a depth value of 36, making it the farthest display in the MMFA district.[82] The experience of depth of the building is further supported by the types of its spaces. Indeed, the Bourgie Pavilion is a succession of b-spaces culminating in dead ends, or a-spaces. It offers very little movements to and through the spaces, which enhances its distance from the entrance and equally restricts its access. The pavilion's top-floor Inuit art exhibition is at the farthest point of not only the Pavilion, but also of the Museum District. Consequently, it is the least structurally and spatially accessible exhibition.[83]

[81] Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space,* 104.
[82] The second most segregated pavilion is that of Liliane and David M. Stewart with a depth value of 21.
[83] The sociocultural implications of that location will be further discussed in chapter two. Additionally, a museum layout mainly composed of a- and b-spaces, like here, maximizes control over the visitor's movement and experience and offers little social potential. Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space*, 105.

Analyzing the architecture of the fourth level alone, housing the Inuit art exhibition, I determined a depth value of 3.[84] Although clear structural delineations within the space distinguish two main rooms, its floor plan and spatial devices (edges and landmarks) actually reveal two exhibition spaces and one hall [Figure 11, 23]. Totalling approximately 325 m^2, the top floor allocates 94.2 m^2 to the display of Inuit art and 104.4 m^2 to the contemplation of the building's surroundings.[85] The floor plan in figure 10 reveals the separation of the floor space in three, plainly demarcating the space framed by the atrium and skylight as exhibition room 2 and clearly positioning outside views of Mount Royal and the Golden Square District on display. The syntactic concepts of spatial devices and lines or axes of sight further help to understand the segmentation of the space and how its architecture and organization further remove Inuit art from sight and circulation. Proposed by Michael Brawne, spatial devices directly borrow from Lynchean urban concepts of *district, landmarks,* and *edges*.[86]

> The *districts* refer to the sections of the building that can be "read" as separate spatial or visual units, and thus become divisions that can be easily grasped by visitors; the *edges* refer to the spatial elements that can act as boundaries between different parts of the building, to emphasize the distinction between one part and another, while linking them into a coherent whole; and the *landmarks* are the visual elements that play the role of points of reference, for instance the view from outside.[87]

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[84] Examining solely the physical separation of the space in rooms, it would be tempting to totalize it at 1, the atrium entrance and the exhibition (0 + 1, instead of 0 + 1 + 2). Yet the positioning of the elevators and the stairs, the large window panels facing Museum Avenue, and the concrete pillars, visually segment the floor space into three; the floor's entrance being distinct from the spaces reserved for the glassed-in atrium and that of the exhibition.
[85] Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, "Plan Espace Hydro-Québec," (Montreal: MMFA, 2004): 1.
[86] Here Michael Brawne transposed concepts of Lynch's theory of the city (1960) to the architectural environment. See more, Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960).
[87] Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space,* 89.

Accordingly, the fourth floor is articulated in three separate sequences (*districts*) which are linked by short passages, framed by the metal and glass structural ceiling, the concrete columns, and the staircase (*edges*), while the external views of the Golden Square Mile, the Museum District, and of the Mont-Royal (*landmarks*) direct the visitors' path to the inclined white walls (*edges*).[88] Considering these spatial manipulations with a focus on the organization of circulation brings attention to "the usefulness of spatial and visual cues in structuring visitors' movements" towards and away from the exhibition space.[89] Moreover, such a consideration emphasizes the spatially and visually arresting characteristics of the inclined white walls, shielding the entrance to the exhibition space, and reflecting, or redirecting, the gaze and attention of the visitors to the outside views. This experience is further supported by representations of the space from the point of view of a visitor. In other words, tracing the visual fields of a hypothetical individual from specific locations in space allows to understand what is put forth by the space; what is or are the object(s) on display, and how visual elements guide visitors' movements and understanding of the space's narrative. Polygonal, this spatial perception is called *isovist*, or *visual polygon*, and "describes the limits of visibility which are formed by the building, and changes when the visitor moves."[90] Isovists can be used to ascertain a space's *visual integration*, akin to a layout's *spatial integration*, and similarly, to assess a space's accessibility, physical and visual. Analyzing what falls inside and outside of visitors' visual fields, at different points in space, helps determine the key aspects, or narratives, of the space: what is being seen, presented, made visible, and what is being concealed, hidden, silenced. Visitors are experiencing the space around them in terms of axes and lines of sight that cut across rooms and establish links through and between them. These support their subsequent movements,

[88] Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space,* 89.
[89] *Ibid*.
[90] *Ibid*., 108.

what and how they move through and within spaces, and directly impact what see. Playing with visitors' visual fields on the Inuit art floor, four points of view were examined: in front of the elevators, outside of the staircase, in front of the glassed-in atrium, and in front of the introduction wall text [Figures 2–4, 11, 15, 22–23]. When drawn out, the visual fields and axes or lines corresponding to each location expose clear, direct, and open visual and spatial relationships between the first two districts (spaces) of the floor's linear sequence as opposed to a restricted access to the second exhibition space [Figures 11, 14, 22–23]. This demonstrates how the organization of the space highly favours connections and engagement to immersive views of the pavilion's surroundings: sights and structures orient bodies from different entrance points to the glass atrium and skylight first and foremost. Interconnected by continuous visual lines and axes, this is where the visual fields intersect [Figures 22–23]. Narrow and partially hidden, the exhibition entrance does not offer direct lines of sight to its space nor display. As a matter of fact, the wall supporting the introduction to the exhibition extends inward, overlapping behind the closest inclined panel and creating a hidden, dark, and narrow passage to the display. From the atrium, visitors can only glimpse at the exhibition through the cracks between the inclined white walls. The resulting visual access is thus highly limited. Furthermore, the path to the Inuit art exhibition is characterized by broken lines and restricted axes of sight, visually segregating the space and its content, and restricting movements towards and into the space.

The approach of space syntax allows for the description and analysis of spaces in a systematic way through the identification and representation of distinct elements of and in spatial layouts and by measuring their configurational properties. Yet this method is also concerned with the sociability of buildings. Kali Tzortzi aptly states how "[a] spatial layout can *reflect* social patterns, by mapping existing relations or concepts into configurational properties (such as

integration or *segregation*), but it can also *create* them by shaping pattern of movement and co-presence in a layout."[91] Accordingly, a syntactic analysis can be used to demonstrate how a layout contributes to the reproduction of social ideas and knowledge (reflective or reproductive function), by mapping them into space, and how it also generates new social potentials enabling a multiplicity of encounters (creative or generative function).[92] In an attempt to link and interpret the spatial and social qualities and patterns of buildings, scholars Bill Hillier, Julienne Hanson, and John Peponis[93] proposed *long* and *short* models of spatial design. The idea behind these distinctive models is to examine the degree of formality (ratio of rules to randomness) of a spatial system. A *long* model is one with many rules, highly structured, and a *short* model is one with few, in which the control of the layout over visitors is minimized.[94] The long-short model distinction is a key component in determining and addressing spaces' reflective or creative quality. "Long model will tend to reproduce the same pattern of relations, because most are governed by rules, while short models will tend to act *generatively*, by creating new relational patterns."[95] In other words, the more movements are prescribed by the spatial layout, the longer the model is, and, consequently, the more controlled is the information presented.[96] Accordingly, and informed by the syntactic analysis conducted in this section, I argue that the CMB pavilion, and more specifically its fourth floor, is consistent with a long model system. Its spaces are arranged in a linear pattern which support a

[91] Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space,* 109.
[92] Tzortzi continues, "[c]orrespondingly, syntactic analysis can be used in both ways: to show how a spatial layout is constituted as a dependant variable, by retrieving the social information built into the spatial layout of a building and to investigate how it acts as an independent variable, by assessing the impact of the spatial layout on how people use a building (Hillier et al., 1987; Hillier, 1996)." (Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space,* 109.)
[93] Bill Hillier, Julienne Hanson, and John Peponis, "What do we mean by building function?," in *Designing for Building Utilisation*, eds James A. Powell et al., (London: Spon, 1984): 61–72, Frieda D. Peatross and John Peponis, "Space, education and socialization," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research 12*, no. 4 (1995): 366–385.
[94] Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space,* 110.
[95] *Ibid*.
[96] To facilitate the interpretation of museums' spatial morphologies, Kali Tzortzi proposes a table, descriptive and functional, that represents the relations between these social and spatial characteristics, spaces' semantic and syntactic decisions (architecture and design), and their effects on visitors' behaviors and experiences.

formal and prescribed navigation in and of the space.[97] The pavilion architecture and design further order space in a single sequence contributing to and framing a pre-given narrative, or rather, a controlled intervention and representation of ideas of knowledge informed by the architects and curators' decisions. Consequently, the building's spatial layout proves to be more *reflective* than generative. The architecture and spatial organization embody social ideas about knowledge and history that are continuously reinforced and consolidated by visitors' uses of spaces, heavily controlled. The segregation of rooms from others within and between floors as well as the repetition of floor sequences further reduce the exploratory and interconnected possibility of museums' spaces. As a result, the objects-subjects displayed are highly intelligible, yet the content is predictable and redundant, or fixed, per the institutional intentions and values.[98] The *long* model system's lack of relationality and its reproductive and reflective function can support a colonial and restrictive representation of art history, and in this case, of Inuit art and culture.

Conclusion

This syntactic analysis analyzed the ways in which the spatial layout of the CMB building and the pavilion's top floor could and was intended to be used by examining "the complex relations between spaces and how they affect each other by co-existing simultaneously".[99] The design and architecture of the pavilion and the display of Quebec and Canadian art collections, while accommodating a very limited floor plan, were very much dependent on the organization of the rest of the Museum District, and especially of the Desmarais pavilion. The proximity of these two

[97] There is no flow between the exhibitions; no previews, backward or sideways glances, and no dialogues other than the linear and chronological one offered by the museum (inverted or not). The exhibitions are organized thematically, abiding by a linear chronological retelling of history. However, there is one floor that makes distinct forays into the future and integrates modern and contemporary indigenous artworks put in conversation with the art and cultural production of colonial times.
[98] Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space*, 113.
[99] *Ibid*., 103–104. The concept of co-existence is of definitive importance and is deeply related to the concept of spatial relation which factors spatial behaviors of visitors and positions architecture and design as authoritative elements.

pavilions, the CMB is only accessible through Desmarais pavilion, affected the organization of the collections of the former in an inverted chronology.[100] Indeed, the display of artworks from 1960s to the 1980s communicates directly with that of international contemporary art after 1950s collection, in continuity.[101] From this location, the CMB pavilion retraces Quebec and Canada's art history to "the dawn of Canadian art in New France," [1700s] before concluding by showcasing modern and contemporary Inuit art.[102] The juxtaposition of these two pavilions, and thereby of their collections, accentuates the linear organization of space and display of the CMB pavilion as well as the segregation of Inuit art, presented at the end of this historical retelling, as if the Inuit artworks were created pre-contact, instead of in the latter half of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first. A closer look to the space of the fourth floor in relation to the others in the CMB pavilion as well as these of the Museum District bring forth how its location can and does influence its interpretation and experience.

In this case study, the concept of spatial relations is especially important. An exhibition space and its content are not separate from the museum building, its architecture, and design. More importantly, the visitors' spatial behaviours greatly inform and support the structure's narrative authority, which in turn frames and orients their bodies and movements in space. The Inuit art exhibition space is a dead end, at the farthest point of the Museum District, architecturally hidden, removed from view, and structurally segregated. Visual fields instead intersect under the glassed-

[100] Jacques Des Rochers, "Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion," interview by Audrey Robillard, April 30, 2023.
[101] "Quebec and Canadian Art Collection", Montreal Museum of Fine Art, https://www.mbam.qc.ca/en/collections/quebec-and-canadian-art/
[102] *Ibid*. This chronological organization moreover accommodated the large canvases found in the 1940-50s and 1960-80s collections appropriate to being displayed in the tunnel and the S1 level. Similarly, it was said that Inuit art was the only collection that could be displayed in the limited exhibition space on the fourth floor considering its predominance of sculpture not requiring that much wall space. Jacques Des Rochers, "Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion," interview by Audrey Robillard, April 30, 2023. Yet, this argument importantly ignores the varied artistic practices of Inuit communities which include drawings, prints, and photography to name a few, as well as disregarding problems and concerns of the MMFA's collection and mode of collecting Inuit art.

in atrium and skylight, where light and movements flow. Spatial organization and architecture point to another display. Space syntax, as Tzortzi aptly puts it, engages with the social information contained through buildings' spatial configuration.[103] Directly referencing architect and Professor Thomas A. Markus, she notes how "[b]uildings express power relations by subdividing spaces, restricting choices, and making some spaces less accessible or more segregated than others, in order to '*control interfaces between people and between them and objects such as museums exhibits*'."[104] [Author's italics] Markus addresses the social power dynamics configured in the museum's space in subtractive terms and argues that restrictions in and of spaces embody, reproduce, and support sociocultural ideas about knowledge.[105] Markus's proposition, echoed by many scholars, highlights the critical function of space syntax in revealing the interplay between museums' architecture, the objects on display, and visitors' experiences in and of the space, and the definitive role of spatial organization (and design) in the production of socio-cultural and historical knowledge. A spatial mapping of artistic theory and history, the structure and organization of the museum is a script enacted by architecture and moving bodies in space. So, I ask, what stories and knowledge are performed by the fourth floor for its visitors?

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[103] Kali Tzortzi*, Museum Space*, 90.
[104] Thomas A. Markus, *Building and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of the Modern Building Types* (London: Routledge, 1993): 23 cited in *Ibid*., 91.
[105] "The definitive function of the museum as building type, [Markus] proposes, is the classification of knowledge. Its spatial organization, by means of the degrees of accessibility of spaces, or the number of alternative routes to a space, allows the presentation of objects within a sequence, as belonging to a certain category or class, according to a given theoretical position." *Ibid*., 91.

Section 2—Art and Design: A phenomenological stroll through history

Space syntax allows for the recognition of the relationship between architecture and the concept of narrative. As such, it analyzes how the spatial organization and design of a space orders knowledge to communicate stories and allow for some bodies to move a certain way, while disorienting others. Applied to the study of museum architecture, it structurally and visually classifies and establishes relationships between museum subjects, directly impacting their reception and interpretation. Building on spatial analysis, the concept of narrative, when applied to architecture and museum spaces, understands the role of the built environment as a corporeal and phenomenological instrument of communication and translation. In this chapter, I build on the previous spatial analysis of the Bourgie pavilion and its top floor and investigate their phenomenological characteristics. I position the museum as a narrator or storyteller and examine the stories embodied and framed in the CMB fourth floor's space. Departing from space syntax, I examine how meaning is co-constructed through sensorial experiences of space. I re-visit the museum's Inuit art display and spatial organization through the senses paying attention to the power of language in its material and phenomenological forms. I expand on an analysis of the relationships between spaces, and the ways in which they influence the perception and meaning of one another, including the spaces of the social and cultural. As scholar Sophia Psarra states in the introduction to *Architecture and Narrative*, "meaning is not exclusively in the morphological properties of space themselves, nor in the cultural processes of its formation and interpretation, but in the *dynamic network of spatial, social, intellectual and professional practices* that embody and produce different kinds of social knowledge."[106] [My italics] She importantly discusses the

[106] Sophia Psarra, "Introduction," *Architecture and Narrative: The Formation of Space and Cultural Meaning* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009): 3.

interconnectedness of spaces and their configuration in the formation and interpretation of narrative environments like museums.[107] Accordingly, I direct my attention to the connections between the spaces designed on the fourth floor of the Bourgie pavilion and interrogate their participation in creating and narrating stories. I examine the floor's spatial configuration using a phenomenological approach in an attempt to map these relationships in space and onto visitors' bodies. Building on the growing understanding of the importance and influence of the senses in articulating the world around us and our experiences, this approach recognizes that narratives and identities are activated through the uses and movements of visitors in space.

Furthermore, I contend that a focus on the affective relations to spaces and places, co-constructed by culture and architecture, participates in "taking apart the [settler colonial] story, revealing the underlying texts, and giving voice to things that are often known intuitively" in concordance with Tuhiwai-Smith's decolonial and decolonizing methodology.[108] Phenomenology as a practice pays attention to the senses and perceptions in bodily processes of making sense of the world and thus contests the primacy of the visual and associated didactic discourses importantly informed by Western thought and colonialism. First developed by Edmund Husserl and later expanded by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology helps connect the perceptual and the rational and underlines the influence of sensorial experiences in the creation of meaning and knowledge of and about the world, positioning perceptions as background to actions.[109] In dialogue with architecture and space, phenomenology informs how we infer meaning from our environment and attend to the ways in which individuals relate to, experience, and re-construct this world

[107] Configuration refers to a set of relationships among things, or spaces in this case, interdependent to an overall structure.
[108] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "Imperialism, History, Writing and Theory, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Thirded (London: Zed, 1999): 34.
[109] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Sensation as a Unit of Experience," *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2005): 3–4.

through the senses. It posits that all experiences are overlaid with knowledge and postulates that objects and subjects of perception are not signifying but are directed, oriented, and intentionally layered with meaning. As such, their orientation is informed by their sociocultural location and that of the bodies paying attention. Their perception and experience are thus socially and spatially constructed. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy centres the human within the experiential world, supplementing and defining its environment.[110] This environment, with which we find ourselves in a continuous and contingent exchange/relation extends beyond the natural world to include spaces and places delineated and framed by architecture and its many declinations. Merleau-Ponty argues that the human body is at the centre of the experiential world, claiming "that knowledge emerges from the interaction between the body and space around it."[111] His phenomenology of perception underscores the ineffability of narrative, of making sense of the world, as a bodily experience, and recognizes the role of embodied movements and actions in cognition. The body is, similar to architecture, both frame and instigator of meaning, mediating the world and its narratives. Building on a growing understanding of the role of senses in apprehending the world, the scholarly work of David Howes has been significant in demonstrating the interplay of senses, or intersensoriality, and their contribution to the aestheticizing of life, meaning, and experience that ensued in the modern industrial era, as well as attesting to "the role of culture in *shaping* how the senses are constructed and lived."[112] The life of the senses in society and their cultural elaboration and

[110] As architect Juhani Pallasmaa aptly describes "Our bodies and movements are in constant interaction with the environment; the world and the self-inform and redefine each other constantly." Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses,* 40. "Architecture is essentially an extension of nature into the man-made realm, providing the ground for perception and the horizon of experiencing and understanding the world. It is not an isolated and self-sufficient artifact; it directs our attention and existential experience to wider horizons. Architecture also gives a conceptual and material structure to societal institutions, as well as to the conditions of daily life." *Ibid*., 41.

[111] Jonathan Hale, "Narrative Environments and the Paradigm of Embodiment," *Museum Making: Narratives, Architecture, Exhibitions*, Suzanne Macleod, et al. eds, (London: Routledge, 2012): 197.

[112] David Howes, *Senses and Sensation*, 4: 4.

categorization affect their perception and mediation. In addition, sociocultural values importantly connote the perception and sensorial experience of the built environment. According to the concept of phenomenology—of perception, of objects, of space—the physical contexts of our actions and modes of being are constantly shaping us as we are shaping them. This approach supports looking at different elements constituting the built environment, their perceptions, and orientations, to examine how their significance influences each other and co-creates spatial narratives about and framing the objects-subjects displayed. In this chapter, I look at the element of glass and the contrasting experience of the space it offers. Along with the colours of the walls, the integration of glass has been carefully and intentionally designed on the fourth floor and throughout the pavilion and critically influences visitors' experience of the space.

Phenomenological Stroll

The use of glass in the Bourgie pavilion creates a crescendo experience culminating in its top floor. From the tunnel gallery to the fourth level, walls of glass gradually reveal views of the city to visitors. As they ascend from one level to the next, the commitment of the pavilion to the evolution of Quebec and Canada's cultural heritage becomes increasingly apparent. The MMFA's intended path through the Claire and Marc Bourgie pavilion leads visitors to a white window-framed room overlooking the Museum and Golden Square Mile districts. Facing the elevators and stairs, a wall of windows filters an abundance of natural light into the space [Figures 2, 13]. Sleek leather benches invite visitors to sit and contemplate an unfolding panoramic view of the city. The hall is bare and designed with white walls, window panels, supportive concrete columns, and a skylight, geometrically fragmented by metal rods, which runs to the glassed-in atrium [Figures 11, 14, 22–23]. Glass dominates the space, and its architecture guides visitors from one space to another. In front of the elevators and running across the ceiling, its path ends in the glassed-in atrium mediating impressive views of Montreal's urban landscape and its famous Mount Royal.

The Museum's and architects' insistence on and intention to locate Quebec and Canadian art collections within and in dialogue with Montreal's Golden Square Mile is mediated through windows. The architectural use of glass in the pavilion encourages visitors to locate their experience of the province and nation's art history in the space of the city. A dominant and prevalent material in and importantly framing the spaces, glass continuously connects museumgoers to their immediate urban surroundings. Views from the city become as much part of the interior and exhibition's design and experience. This material further supports the architectural and institutional work of urban integration and the project's intention of bridging past and future together. Indeed, the use of glass, along with marble, specific to the contemporary section, is in concordance with the former church and other pavilions of the Museum District. The ultimate integration of the city into the museum's environment occurs on the top floor of the pavilion. As Tanya Southcott aptly states in her review, "[h] ere, isolated as it is, the museum's Inuit art collection is set against the building's closest connection to the landscape, the silhouette of the mountain against the open sky."[113] There, the predominance of glass projects one of Montreal's historic and most prolific socio-economic districts in the background of visitors' experience. This element of architecture and design strengthens the pavilion's belonging to the Museum District and neighborhood and expresses its strong connection and identification with the surrounding community, and the identity of the MMFA members and founders.[114] In contrast, the Inuit art

[113] Tanya Southcott, "Art History 101," 16.

[114] The use of glass also exposes the pavilion's dialogue with the adjacent church; standing in lieu of the Sunday School, it emulates the church's aura by mimicking its architectural and ideological elevation (supported on the fourth floor by the glassed-in atrium and skylight that visually and phenomenologically connect visitors to the sky and the above) as well as integrating vast and open areas around its exhibition spaces, alluding to religious alcoves, spaces of and for reflection and contemplation. More than an aesthetic commentary, attention to the church and its integration into the museum complex also underlines its long and intertwined history with the MMFA, "its former congregation sharing class and ethnic identities with the founding figures of the Art Association of Montreal, the precursor to the MMFA" as Whitelaw shares in her review. Anne Whitelaw, "A New Pavilion for Quebec and Canadian Art," 167.

exhibition is displayed in an enclosed, dark, and windowless room whose entrance is partially hidden by massive inclined white walls protruding from the ground at the edge of the atrium/skylight [Figures 14–15]. From a conservation perspective, it seems justified to erect large wall panels to protect Inuit works from a constant flow of natural light allowed in by the predominance of glass on the fourth floor and enhanced by the reflective quality of its white walls. Yet, this structural element and subsequent spatial organization create a contrasting and dissonant experience of the Inuit art exhibition's space. Concealing its entrance, the inclined white walls structurally and visually remove the exhibition from view and restrain visitors' circulation to the space [Figures 14–15]. It physically restricts the amount of natural light coming into the space and further confines the display to a very small footprint. This spatial and perceptual confinement is enhanced by a lack of windows, dimmed dome lighting, and dark blue walls. The cramped exhibition design and sudden darkness propose a disorientating experience. Dissonant, the experience that emerges from the contrasting design of the two exhibition spaces which opposes an open, vast, and luminous space to a dark and confined one, displaces the didactic significance of the display of Inuit art. As a result, I argue that the structural and conceptual separation of the floor testifies to the city's dominant position over the space, and, therefore, over the culture displayed within. An analysis of the perception of the floor space reveals how an experience of its rooms is dependent on their spatial organization and how design is an influential element of their impressions. The linear juxtaposition of opposing designs deeply affects the experience of each exhibition space. Their physical-sensorial identity is continually constructed and activated in opposition.

Dark Space and Primitive Display

More than contributing to a dissonant experience of space, the contrasting use of glass on the fourth floor also carries sociocultural meanings and values influencing its perception. I trace

these back to Modernism's conceptualization of glass in architecture and the subsequent values and concerns attached to both material and its concept. I contend that its lasting effects on contemporary architecture and design contribute to a critical understanding of windows, their uses, and their purposes. As a result of industrial and technical progress, clear and translucid glass quickly became a symbol of modernity. Believed to improve the quality of life, it provided architecture with another means "to control climate, provide comfort and let light into the darkness of interior space."[115] Progress in the technology of glass allowed for the complete integration of windows into the architecture while providing the necessary means to "filter the air, encounter the light and the sun, and to provide a visual connection, or vista, to the outer landscape and urban context."[116] Le Corbusier's 1935 treatise on glass, "the Fundamental Material of Modern Architecture," further noted the importance of light and defined glass as the primary material of modern architecture.[117] Many architects following in Le Corbusier's footsteps equally stressed the function of illumination and of light as marking the continuity between the exterior and interior, and of architecture as the conquest of life.[118] Architectural historian Beatriz Colomina moreover underlines Modern architecture's use of glass in reaction to a fear of diseases (such as tuberculosis) and describes modern architects as health providers. She comments on how "Nineteenth-century architecture was demonized as unhealthy, and sun, light, ventilation, exercise, roof terraces, hygiene, and whiteness were offered as means to prevent, if not cure, tuberculosis."[119] Glass, therefore, was presented as a medical device, "opening windows are eliminated, and the façades

[115] Tim Benton in Le Corbusier, et al., "Glass, the Fundamental Material of Modern Architecture," *A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture 19*, no. 2 (2012): 283. See also Brent Richard, *New Glass Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006): 11.
[116] *Ibid*.
[117] "For Le Corbusier, for whom 'architecture is the masterful, correct and magnificent play of volumes brought together in light,' the primary function of the window was to let in light". *Ibid*., 283.
[118] Tim Benton in Le Corbusier, et al., "Glass, the Fundamental Material of Modern Architecture," 292–294.
[119] Beatrix Colomina, "X-Ray Architecture: Illness as Metaphor." *Positions*, no. 0 (Fall 2008): 32.

become walls of glass."[120] Colomina further notes that "even the walls [were painted] white to reveal any contamination".[121] Her arguments build into Brent Richards' and Tim Benton's discussion on glass architecture and the influence of Le Corbusier, as she demonstrates how glass and windows became instruments of control, exposing buildings' interiors and their inhabitant to public and social's scrutiny. In fact, "the glass house acted as a symbol of both the new form of surveillance and of health"[122] and discourses around glass were, furthermore, layered with racial and cultural bias. Modern architecture's concepts of (linear) evolution, progress, and climatic determination, or control, epitomized by glass, were supported by and upheld racialization and its subsequent processes.[123] Closely associated with and performed through glass and windows, these elements "subsumed in the broader ideology of internationalism and colour-blindness embodied by modernism's white walls."[124] Glass, recognized as a symbol of progress, carried, and still does today, ideas of the liberation of space and light that echoes increasing economic and social freedom, mobility, and access. Acting as a protective membrane, it shields from the exterior while establishing contact with, and I would argue, supremacy over, its interior. Following technical evolution, the material acquired an increased capacity for environmental control which allowed for new ways to capture and (re) define space, as well as (re) framing the bodies and objects within.

Irene Cheng, Charles L. Davis II, and Mabel O. Wilson examine the role of architecture in sociocultural processes of subjugation, tied to the construction of race and part of the modernist project which demands a reconsideration of the modern museum, its role as a repository of knowledge, and its dissemination of cultural production. Indeed, although the museum originates

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[120] *Ibid*., 33.
[121] Beatrix Colomina, "X-Ray Architecture: Illness as Metaphor," 33.
[122] *Ibid*.
[123] Irene Cheng et al, "Introduction," *Race and Modern Architecture: A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present* (Baltimore, Maryland: Project Muse): 4–6.
[124] *Ibid*., 6.

from an obsession with classification and narratives of "racial evolution, decline, diffusion, and hybridization",[125] the authors confront its modern concerns for inclusivity and universal representations, in the exhibitions' design and display, but especially reflected in its architecture.[126] What the authors address here is significant not only in an examination of the architecture of the CMB pavilion and its interior design but also in the concept embodied and embedded within its structure and spaces, and its museum nature. The classifying idiom of museums has been deeply influenced by the concept of race, of human difference, "that established hierarchies of power and domination between Europe and Europe's 'others,' by classifying human subjects into modern/non-modern, civilized/primitive, white/nonwhite, and human/less than human binaries."[127] By nature and practice, museums "produced rationalized hierarchical classifications of racial difference that in turn bolstered and justified European and American conquest and rule over peoples and cultures labelled as primitive or autochthonous."[128] This act of rationalization and classification, and the conceptualization of race importantly influenced leading concepts of modern architecture and architectural styles, some of which define the space of the fourth floor, most notably, window panels, white walls, and open space. In contradistinction, small, confined, and dark interior spaces evoke Modernism's "other." I argue that binaries characterizing both practices of classification and conceptualization of race are enacted on the last floor of the CMB pavilion, translated into modern architecture. Although the space is conceptually divided into three sections, architecture and design structure the floor according to two distinct and opposing spaces; one filled

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[125] Irene Cheng et al, *Race and Modern Architecture,* 136.

[126] Addressing architectural modernism, Irene Cheng points to how: "Modernism was to be raceless. The new architectural style, [Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson] wrote, 'exist throughout the world, is unified and inclusive, not fragmentary and contradictory. […] Thus, a style whose characteristic features of lack of ornamentation and utilitarianism had been associated only half a century earlier with the superiority of a particular race was now tied to the transcendence of national and racial divisions." *Ibid*., 152.

[127] "Colonial violence and slavery were inextricably entangled with cultural narratives and forms embodying reason and progress." Irene Cheng et al, R*ace and Modern Architecture,* 4–5.

[128] *Ibid*.

with natural light and open, and another confined behind large white walls and dimly lighted. The sociocultural meanings associated with the structural and design elements defining each space, progress and evolution, on the one hand, and uncivilized and primitive on the other, add to a dissonant spatial perception of space. Art historian Anne Whitelaw comments on how "the inclined walls and narrow entrance leading from the light-filled atrium to the dark interior space also recall the sense of mystery and exoticism that has historically accompanied exhibitions of so-called primitive art."[129] Organized thematically, the exhibition displays a cramped labyrinth of glass cases at waist height presenting various Inuit sculptures dimly illuminated by dome lighting, against dark blue walls.

The space's sensorial experience not only contradicts the claim of the introductory wall text to highlight the contemporaneity of Inuit artistic production and its expression in everyday life, but its spatial and social confinement of Inuit art and culture further contests the CMB Pavilion's claims of celebratory inclusion. The space on the fourth-floor contracts as I enter the exhibition. The architectural confinement of the space of display is accentuated and reflected by the confinement of the artworks in glass cases. An impression of control permeates from both structures. The contraction of the space as well as the strict framing of the artworks restrict and control the movements of visitors and the interpretation of the exhibited works resulting in a phenomenological control of the life of Inuit art history. This sudden compression of space contrasts with the open light-filled glassed-in atrium and hall, the free-flowing plan of which invigorates and extends the deeper visual effect of architectural spatiality. This encourages visitors to experience the atrium space and its panoramic views, and favours a more sensorial, experiential, and contemplative experience, compared to the more didactic and authoritative path structured by

[129] Anne Whitelaw, "A New Pavilion for Quebec and Canadian Art," 169.

the glass display cases and the separating wall panels within the exhibition. While each of these spaces and their architectural organization are commonly found in museum spaces and allow for various experience and interpretation of the art presented, their juxtaposition in the CMB pavilion fourth floor creates a contrasting experience that accentuates the contradictory characteristics of the different exhibition spaces. As a result, the Inuit art exhibition space appears even smaller and darker, while the glassed-in atrium is perceived to be bigger and more luminous.

Conclusion

To conclude, glass, recognized as a symbol of progress, carry ideas of the liberation of space and light as well as moral progress, order, cleanliness, and health echoing increasing economic and social freedom, mobility, and access. On the fourth floor, these sociocultural associations cast a literal physical shadow over the display of Inuit art and culture and impact their spatial and conceptual representation. An important architectural element, glass is critically significant to the affects of the dissection of space, the subsequent relations between its parts, and the contrasting play of light. Large, inclined panels, seemingly protecting Inuit art from natural light, enclose the exhibition space. Hidden behind white walls, the display sets in a dark and confined interior, akin to a cave, or an attic. The enclosed, dark, and windowless Inuit exhibition space spatially and socially contradicts modernist discourses of morality and evolution, epitomized by pristine white walls and clear glass, and, by contrast, embodies notions of immorality, primitiveness, and dirt. In addition to the lack of space for the contemplation of art, the design of the Inuit art exhibition space actively directs visitors back to the glassed-in atrium. From the inside of the exhibition space, natural light peaks through the inclined wall panels, constantly gesturing to the proximity of a more welcoming, luminous open space, in which the museum's urban identity is displayed. This phenomenological juxtaposition, bordering on encroachment, reinforce the position of the MMFA in the background, shaping the contours and extending into the exhibition

space of Inuit art. A sensed presence, it stands behind visitors' interpretation and reception of Inuit art and culture. Responsively, *Takuminartut* is continuously orientated toward the institutional body, distinctively dis/misplaced and othered.

Building on a purely visual experience of the floor space and questioning the affective and social relationships between the different spaces organized on the fourth floor revealed the invisible presence and processes of racial discourse embedded in and activated through architecture.[130] Perceptions and impressions of the contradictory architecture and design of the fourth floor affirm national and provincial authority over the display of Inuit art. The encroached juxtaposition of the spaces and their interconnected experience echo settler colonialism's project of elimination through assimilation and containment.[131] Appropriated within Quebec's and Canada's cultural heritage, and displayed under provincial and national designations, the display of Inuit art replicates the spatial and social structure of settler colonialism.

As visible sites of knowledge, museum buildings create a particular expression and reflection of identity through their ordering of space, and art collection. Their spaces' geometric properties, perceptual fields, and visual axes are linked in a sequence of human and non-human actions and embodied experiences. As demonstrated, examining architecture, spatial design and organization through a phenomenological lens allows for furthering the investigation of the power relations and narratives embedded in space. As theorized by Henri Lefebvre, "all spaces are produced, lived and understood through relationships of power."[132] This understanding of space is in direct conversation with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and discussion of the body as an interpretative

[130] Irene Cheng et al, R*ace and Modern Architecture,* 4–9.
[131] Lorenzo Veracini, "Containment, Elimination, Settler Colonialism," 18–21.
[132] Tricia Austin, "Scales of Narrativity," *Museum Making: Narratives, Architecture, Exhibitions*, Suzanne Macleod, et al. eds, (London: Routledge, 2012): 109.

medium and echoes Bruno Latour's statement that meaning has to be consistently reiterated and re-established.[133] The built environment shapes us as individuals as we simultaneously shape the architecture and design of the spaces and places we inhabit. Latour precises:

> This position implies that the physical and cultural context of the museum and of the gallery, the architecture, the collection, the curators, the layout, the lighting, the typography, the materials, colour, forms chosen for the design, the media, the sound and the visitors' expectations and behaviours all have a part to play in producing and sustaining the meaning of the place. (…) The narrative re-articulates the sense our bodies have already made of the world and we can be called to attention by both intellectual and corporeal devices.[134]

More specifically, Latour, Lefebvre and Merleau-Ponty argue for the importance and influence of contexts on the experience and interpretation of the world. Their discussions recognize the role of the physical, historical, socio-cultural, and political circumstances in which space and exhibitions were designed, understood, and experienced.[135] It is by drawing from these contexts that we can deduce the narratives embedded in built environments such as museums.

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[133] Merleau-Ponty-Lefebvre-Latour (Borrowing Tricia Austin's approach and framework): "Merleau-Ponty argues that humans develop a body schema that comprises not only our physical body but also its relationship to the surrounding world, in other words we carry with us a sense of depth, dimensionality, flow, movement, form, colour, tactility, texture and lustre." Tricia Austin "Scales of Narrativity," 108.

[134] *Ibid*., 109.

[135] Design and museum narratives: "Designers (and architects) are changing the visitor's perception and ways of seeing galleries through the use of lenses, gauzes, filters, mirrors, shadows and illusions. (…) Just as the theatre space influences the reception of a play, exhibits are influenced by the context in which they are viewed. (…) As the visitors move around the museum, they have to question what is set, what is exhibit, what is prop, museum artefact, who is spectator, who is performer?" Greer Crawley, "Staging Exhibition: Atmospheres of Imagination," *Museum Making: Narratives, Architecture, Exhibitions*, Suzanne Macleod et al. eds (London: Routledge, 2012): 14. Structural elements act as devices establishing connections (physical and perceptual) between objects (architectural, design, curatorial) and ideas.

Conclusion—Discursive Spatiality

The previous section's study of the Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, and specifically its fourth floor, attests to the importance of understanding the influence of architecture and design in the representation and interpretation of ethnocultural works. Spatial organization and space's syntactical elements considerably frame and orient visitors' experiences. Space, architecture, and design become co-producers of artistic and (socio-) cultural knowledge, alongside and in communication with the exhibition a8nd the objects on display. Their assemblage participates in the intensity that connects sociality to spatiality in everyday life, characterizing place and distinguishing it from space. A syntactic analysis of the space on the fourth floor reports the spatial inaccessibility of the Inuit art exhibition. The display is located at the farthest point of the whole Museum District, the furthest from the museum entrance, and is structurally and visually segregated. Large white panels architecturally remove the exhibition from view and restrict its access. Lines of sight directed by architecture further deflect visitors' attention away from the Inuit art exhibition, instead converging under the glassed-in atrium and skylight, mediating impressive views of the city and its emblematic Mount Royal. Attending to the affective experience of these spaces helped to understand the influence of the floor's organization and architecture on their perception and interpretation. Furthermore, building from an understanding of phenomenology it contributes to an investigation of the meanings and narratives embedded and activated in these spaces. Glass is a predominant material and design element on the fourth floor, and its prevalence predominantly affects perceptions of the space. The use of glass actively participates in creating a contrasting and dissonant experience. Alongside architecture, the window walls, glassed-in atrium, and skylight contribute to designing a vast, open, white space, which stands in opposition to the display of *Takuminartut*; small, dark, and confined. In addition to proposing a disorienting

experience to visitors, glass carries sociocultural meanings and values that influence impressions of the fourth-floor space. Modernity and progress are two narratives deeply associated with glass. Translated in perception in space, these narratives of evolution are juxtaposed to a windowless and obscure room, impressed with mystery and exoticism. The sociocultural meanings associated with glass jarringly juxtaposed the two exhibition spaces. In the CMB pavilion, visitors move back in time, past progress and modernity to the artistic world of Inuit communities wrongly positioned as the uncivilized and primitive other. Spatial and phenomenological analyses provide important information to interrogate the place of the fourth floor of the CMB Pavilion. Kim Dovey describes "place" as "a dynamic ensemble of people and environment that is at once material and experimental, spatial and social."[136] This conception highlights "place as a territorialized assemblage, defined by connections"[137] and problematizes the enmeshment of identities and narratives with place. In fact, it discloses the interdisciplinarity of the study of place. Place is both "constructed from the contingencies of site and society, climate and economy" and "inextricably wrapped up with questions of authority and authenticity."[138] The concept of assemblage prioritizes sensation and experience and seeks to unravel the construction of the social reality of places. The concept bridges the material and experiential and connects to the narratives enacted in space and contributing to the sense of a place.[139] As Dovey points out, "Sensation operates at a prereflective level, prior to cognition and meaning. […] But sensation does not exist in things, it is an event that connects the material and expressive poles of the assemblage. The materiality and the meaning of

[136] Kim Dovey, "Making Sense of Place," *Becoming Places: Urbanism/Architecture/Identity/Power* (London: Routledge, 2010): 7.
[137] *Ibid*.
[138] *Ibid*., 11.
[139] "The senses or meanings of the place are neither found within the material urban form nor are they simply added to it, rather they are integrated to the assemblage. (…) What we call 'sense of place' is a phenomenon that connects or spans this materiality/expression dimensions; it cannot be reduced to an essence nor to social construction." *Ibid.,* 30.

place are two sides of a frontier which is the sense of place."[140] From the sense of place emerges a space/place's identity which, while its experience is subjective and dependent on visitors' positionality, arises from its construction and is reiterated through use. Investigating the intersections and convergences of discourses supported by architecture, communicated by design, and addressed through and by the MMFA's Inuit art exhibition and the Quebec and Canadian art pavilion, which discussions and narratives co-construct the fourth floor's sense of place? Which histories are on display and which voices are silenced?

[140] *Ibid*., 25.

Assemblage and Narratives

The concept of assemblage "links the material interactions of bodies and spaces with the expression of meanings."[141] The resulting expressions of a place are an assemblage of representational narratives, urban and design codes and intensities that co-exist and are interdependent with its materiality, flows, and spatial connections. Borrowing from literature, theatre, and film studies, a narrative is a form of representation that is bound with and by sequence, space, and time.[142] A sequence of events or actions, it is also a structure; combining and assembling parts to create a whole, following a "process of selecting, arranging and rendering story material" akin to the ways architecture and design order and organize space.[143] A narrative is as much a result of sensorial experiences as it is "a key process in making sense of oneself and the world."[144] Examining narrative environments demands conceptualizing space as a perceptual condition neither isolated from social contexts nor solely dependent on forms.[145] In fact, in organizing spaces, architecture orders meanings as well as social relationships. In her research, Sophia Psarra discusses the distinct relationship between narrative, the process of narration, and museums. Interestingly, she argues that "analysis of museums can explain how the organizing principles of space and the collection relate to the exploration patterns of visitors, and, therefore, how these buildings become sites for different types of narration."[146] She reflects on buildings as manipulations of space and form and notes how they subsequently form, order, and communicate

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[141] Kim Dovey, *Becoming Places,* 16.
[142] Sophia Psarra, *Architecture and Narrative,* 2.
[143] *Ibid*.
[144] See Tricia Austin, "Scales of Narrativity," 107; Lee H. Skolnick, "Beyond Narrative: Designing Epiphanies," *Museum Making: Narratives, Architecture, Exhibitions*, Suzanne Macleod, et al. eds, (London: Routledge, 2012): 84.
[145] A narrative approach to spatial structure and its design acknowledges the sociability and aesthetic of architecture and its practice. It initiates an active and critical conversation between the perceptual and the conceptual characteristics of space, affected and influenced by the sociocultural context within which a building is built and located.

[146] Sophia Psarra, *Architecture and Narrative,* 2.

cultural meanings.[147] Her analysis concerns the morphology of museum buildings, their embodied experience as well as their "hidden structures", the rules by which they reproduce or destabilize systems of knowledge and semantic relations.[148] While architecture is not a story, the conceptual properties of buildings, their perceptual experiences, and the structural organization of socio-cultural messages are very much instruments for narration. Space, its architecture and design, is both medium and content in the narrative process. It encompasses and frames both the story and its telling.[149] Consequently, architectural expression is equally an actor and effect of the semantic meaning of buildings, contributing to the communication of sociocultural messages.[150] Nonetheless, she importantly notes how "[e]xhibition narratives are different from other narratives in that they are constructed by the interpretation of a collection of artifacts."[151] Although each object can be viewed and interpreted on its own, the design and spatial organization of the exhibition provide additional meanings for each piece and the whole. Thus, exhibition narratives are organized and enacted in space; grounded in a curated temporal and spatial microcosm. Whereas narratives in other media and spaces build on representations of time and space, museums and exhibitions construct their own temporality, affecting the interpretation of the artworks and histories displayed. Recognizing the authority of the built environment in telling stories also reveals

[147] *Ibid*. Her consideration of space also includes and considers the cognitive link between architecture, the designer, and the viewer.

[148] *Ibid*., 4–5. The relationship between the perceptual and the conceptual characteristics of space, "between patterns we can hold in our mind at once and those we grasp gradually through movement", co-produces different and interacting systems of ordering experiences. They inform the relations between the conceptual/perceptual (architecture/spatial experience) order and communicate cultural meanings.

[149] Tricia Austin, "Scales of Narrativity," 108. Author Tricia Austin proposes the concept of narrativity as encompassing both the story and its telling, "the content and the material form or use of media". She importantly acknowledges individuals' or users' roles as co-producers of meaning and narratives.

[150] Sophia Psarra, *Architecture and Narrative,* 2.

[151] *Ibid*., 4. "This means that objects are classified and arranged in space according to some principle or some conceptual underlying framework that orders knowledge in a particular field. While narratives in other media are based on representations of time and space, museum narratives are organized *in* space depending on the ways in which the artifacts are positioned in a layout."

potential and existing tensions between political and institutional narratives and sociocultural realities of past and contemporary everyday life.[152]

The museum is more than a thing in itself or a collection of discrete things, it is an assemblage: "a whole 'whose properties emerge from the interactions between parts'."[153] The buildings, the collections and the exhibitions, the people, the objects and the art, the signs, etc., come together to become the museum but it is the connections and relations between them that make it a place. It is the relations of building-exhibitions-artworks; the flow of people, collections or exhibitions, and art; the interconnection of cultures to times and geographies, of collections to museum spaces, of public to institutional space and social identity, which characterizes the place of the museum and distinguishes it from other places such as shopping malls and marketplaces. More precisely, the CMB pavilion is an assemblage of Quebec, Canadian, Indigenous, and Inuit histories and cultures; MMFA's collections; and, Montreal's urban landscape, views of the Golden Square Mile, religious heritage, Erskine American Church, and the Museum District. It is also one of people, networks, organizations, sociocultural and political hierarchies, and landmarks. The place of Inuit art, and its exhibition on the fourth floor, co-exist with and unfolds within that of the Bourgie pavilion and the museum, continuously becoming and in relation with its surroundings

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[152] These tensions can emerge from "between sometimes oppressive, totalizing narratives and the multiplicity of identities which make up societies; between disciplinary narratives and the need for atmospheres of imagination as a route to an emotional experience; and, linked to this, between a reading of experience as intellectual and conceptual as opposed to sensory and embodied; factual as opposed to fictive; linear as opposed to labyrinthine." Suzanne Macleod, "Narrative, Space, Identity," *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions*, edited by Macleod et al., (London: Routledge, 2012): 1.

[153] Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society*, (New York: Continuum, 2006): 5 cited in Kim Dovey, *Becoming Places*, 16. "The parts of an assemblage are contingent rather than necessary, they are aggregated, mixed and composed; as in a 'machine' they can be taken out and used in other assemblage. For instance, a street is not a thing nor is it just a collection of discrete things. The buildings, trees, cars, sidewalks, goods, people, signs, etc. all come together to become the street, but it is the connections between them that makes it an assemblage or a place. It is the relations of buildings-sidewalks-roadway; the flows of traffic, people and goods, the interconnections of public to private space, and of this street to the city, that make it a 'street' and distinguish it from other place assemblages such as parks, plazas, freeways, shopping malls and marketplaces." Kim Dovey, Becoming Places, 16.

and their changing experiences. It exists not as a separated structure but in relation to other structures and the interactions with and between them, co-existing "with representational narratives, urban design codes and intensities."[154]. As I discussed earlier, the space of the fourth floor is characterized by an intense integration of glass architecture, which highly contributes to the construction of its place-based identity, anchoring the experience of its space within the city. In light of the nature of its assemblage, supported and framed by its architecture, spatial organization, and design, the place of the Inuit art exhibition is displaced in history, one that precedes notable historic and modern provincial and national artistic contributions, and oddly juxtaposed with urban scenery reminiscent of sociocultural and economic power.[155] Following modern and contemporary Inuit art, the CMB pavilion curates a linear retelling of history from the country's founding identities until its modern expansion. Structured and performed on the last floor and reflected in the pavilion's spatial organization, the sense of place emerging from such assemblage continuously affirms provincial, national, and institutional authority over the careful display of Inuit art and culture.[156]

The architecture and design of the Bourgie pavilion create an imagined unified community that draws on ideas and notions of "North" that further reinforce an essentialized Inuit culture "held

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[154] Kim Dovey, *Becoming Places*, 17.

[155] The curators of the CMB pavilion are aware of the time discrepancy performed on the fourth floor and the displacement of Inuit art which they explain citing practical issues. The space on the fourth floor of the CMB pavilion dedicated to the display of art could not have housed another collection except for Inuit art, whose material and size could fit the spatial and light constraints of the floor. Yet, while this may have rung true in 2011 when the Inuit art collection was smaller, it did not account for the continuity and variety of Inuit art practices, nor did it consider future acquisitions or more importantly question the collecting practices that influenced the nature of the collection as it was then. It could be argued that questioning the collection and investigating museum practices were not as talked about then as it is today, which plenty of scholarly research would disprove. It proves however a lack of care for Inuit art, its collection, and its display. Jacques Des Rochers, "Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion," interview by Audrey Robillard, April 30, 2023.

[156] The concept of assemblage is at once the result and an addition to theories and analyses of space, architecture, design, and perception. It is from their interdependent relationships that emerge what I argue are dissonant narratives of the place of the Inuit art exhibition, akin to and building on a dissonant spatial and sensorial experience of the space.

up as emblematic of senses of Canadian selfhood."[157] The exhibition is located at most distant historical point of the pavilion's narrative, at the origin of the nation and province's art history. Additionally, it is integrated within and spatially and visually subjugated by Montreal's most prolific socio-economic district. Housed in the space of the fourth floor, the display is continuously put in conversation and forcibly juxtaposed with the urban surroundings. It is further displaced behind large walls, removed from sight and circulation, and importantly, socio-cultural connections and a shared history. Thus, it is located at the core of the city, amongst its socio-economic success, abiding to a narrative that, I argue, does not celebrate Inuit art for Inuit art's sake and instead supports a colonial reading of its culture and history, favours a romantic ethnographic gaze and support the trope of a vanishing Inuit culture.[158] The spatial displacement of Inuit art in the CMB pavilion, disguised as inclusion, structurally and phenomenologically supports a settler colonial discourse premised on the control of difference, naturalizing and normalizing structures of domination.[159]

Indeed, the floor's architecture and design reveals Inuit art as a discursive resource effectively symbolizing Canadian identity.[160] Reified by the city's omnipresence around and over the space, its organization and design perform an appropriated imagined Inuit identity, silencing

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[157] *Ibid*.
[158] Recalling the well-known myth of the vanishing Indian, I call upon Fatimah Tobing Rony's chapter dedicated on a taxidermic dissection of Robert Flatherty's *Nanook of the North*, which deconstructs the importance of anthropological and visual knowledge in legitimizing regimes of truth, or stereotypes. In this chapter, she looks closely at the film and demonstrates its representation of indigenous people paralleling romantic primitivism in modern anthropology. She calls on the mode of representation of the "ethnographic" in contrast to the practice and concept of taxidermy, which "seeks to make that which is dead look as if it were still living." Fatimah R. Tony, "Taxidermy and Romantic Ethnography," *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996): 101. Romantic ethnography, as she posits, works to present living indigenous people as dying, or from a distant past. As such, it builds from the trope of the vanishing Indian which assumed Indigenous peoples to be already dying, if not dead, "for the effective, 'true' representation of so-called vanishing culture." *Ibid*., 102.
[159] Lisa Cooke, "'North' in a Contemporary Canadian National-Cultural Imaginaries," 236.
[160] Leanne Stuart Pupcheck, "True North: Inuit Art and the Canadian Imagination," *American Review of Canadian Studies 31*, no. 1–2 (2001): 191.

the presence of Canadian settlers and the violent consequences of settler colonialism on Inuit ways of life. Moreover, reinforcing the connection between national art history and identity, and Inuit culture, the organization of space and its phenomenological experience deny transcultural encounters and alternative narratives. The spatial, conceptual, and sensorial connections between Inuit art and the city and its history are heavily restricted, which limits the creation of discussions between the two and discards the influence of cross-cultural intersections in Inuit and Canadian art production. Infused with originary qualities and segregated on the top floor of the pavilion, the display of Inuit art further diminishes and negates Inuit artistic, socio-cultural, and economic autonomy. The cramped case displays, as well as exhibition space, more importantly do not allow for an appreciative interpretation of Inuit artworks and contributes to a lack of care that emanates from the exhibition and its spatial organization. While some of the sculptures are presented so that visitors can see them in the round, for many of them, their tridimensionality is impaired by walls and adjacent glass cases, restricting and negating a full appreciation and care for their carefully carved details.

On the pavilion's top floor, the structural and sensorial segregation of Inuit art parallels narratives of inclusion and celebration that creates a dissonant experience of its exhibition. Structuring settler colonial power relations, the architecture, design, and organization of the space illustrate a national and provincial exploitation of Inuit art for the continuous creation of Canada's sociocultural identity grounded in a lack of care. The pavilion's presentation of past and modern Quebec and Canadian art reflects national and provincial pride and denotes of a strong identification with and connection to (settler colonial) history. The space's architecture and design support celebratory narratives of progress and power, silencing instances of colonial violence and collective oppression reinventing the nation cultural identity. I contend that the glass architecture

of the fourth floor, supported by the design and spatial organization and confining the exhibition space of Inuit modern and contemporary art, should be understood as a modality of domination and subjugation of Inuit culture aligned with Canada's settler colonial project. I argue that what is being displayed under the glassed-in atrium are not Inuit art and culture, nor Montreal and Quebec's socio-economic power, but Canada's settler colonial history, its occupation, and appropriation of the "North".[161] The place of the fourth floor performs originary national-cultural dreams and desires of a founding national nature. It presents Inuit art history as a material space for the repetition and the normalization and naturalization of the nation's settler colonial narrative.

Through analysis of the space's architecture and design, it becomes apparent that the display of the Inuit art collection on the fourth floor of the Bourgie pavilion is actually incidental. The exhibition instead acts as a supporting actor in a larger national-cultural narrative and identity-building project. This exclusionary narrative follows a settler-colonial logic and implies the representation of a singular and authoritative national perspective on both Inuit art and the settler-colonial relationship between Inuit communities and Canada. In fact, it silences Canada's settler colonial project and its violent consequences in the "North". Doing so, it further silences Inuit's lived realities and histories, relegating their presence to a distant past and covering their contemporaneity. The design and spatial organization of the fourth floor do not give space to discuss nor do represent contemporary Indigenous struggles for self-determination, representation, and land reclamations. The introductory text of the exhibition mentions James Houston, an

[161] "National-cultural imaginaries are social imaginaries with the refined objective to draw us into broader senses of national and cultural identities. They draw on shared notions and images that form our senses of a collective knowing, belonging, and place. In the context of settler colonialism, national-cultural imaginaries need to establish and emplace a sense of origins that works to transcend its colonial roots. The work of social imaginaries in settler colonial context is to create new origins that obscure old ones. This is accomplished by the production of cultural forms that work through narrative repetition to emplace people in time and space." Lisa Cooke, "'North' in a Contemporary Canadian National-Cultural Imaginaries," 238.

important actor in the development of Inuit art and its market in the south, and F. Cleveland Morgan, the main instigator of the MMFA's collection, but do so without contextualizing both actors' legacy sociocultural and colonial implications. This absence of discourse and integration of Inuit voices and stories, alongside "othering" and displacing architecture and design, contributes to supporting a settler colonial narrative based on the elimination of the native through containment and appropriation. The space organization and its sensorial perception present an interpretation of the world that is not that of the culture whose art is displayed nor celebrate with care unique artistic practices. The exhibition text may proclaim the MMFA's intentions to display modern and contemporary Inuit art and to celebrate the significance of artistic expression in the everyday lives of Inuit communities as to present their perspective and stories, yet the floor's dialectics reveal the author's identity in that of the institution and the voices speaking being that of Canada's settler community. This structural and phenomenological conclusion also points to the character of the imagined audience for which this exhibition and pavilion were conceived and to larger critiques on the exclusionary nature of museums. This begs the question: who was the intended visitor for this exhibition? How is this representative of the museum's inclusionary efforts? How would the access to and of the exhibition change were it displayed elsewhere? What other narratives would a new space, architecture, and design co-produce? How different would the experience and interpretation of the display be?

This an important question to ponder since the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts actually has plans to move this exhibition to another location in 2024. Leaving a pavilion purposefully built to house a series of art collections of which it was part, how will this future space (re) frame Inuit art and culture?

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Annexe

Figure 1. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion—Side view from the Avenue du Musée; *Provencher Roy,* n.d. Photo by Marc Cramer. https://provencherroy.ca/fr/projet/architecture-mbam-pavillon-dart-quebecois-et-canadien-claire-et-marc-bourgie/

Figure 2. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, 4th floor—Views from the rest area, 2023. Photo by Audrey Robillard.

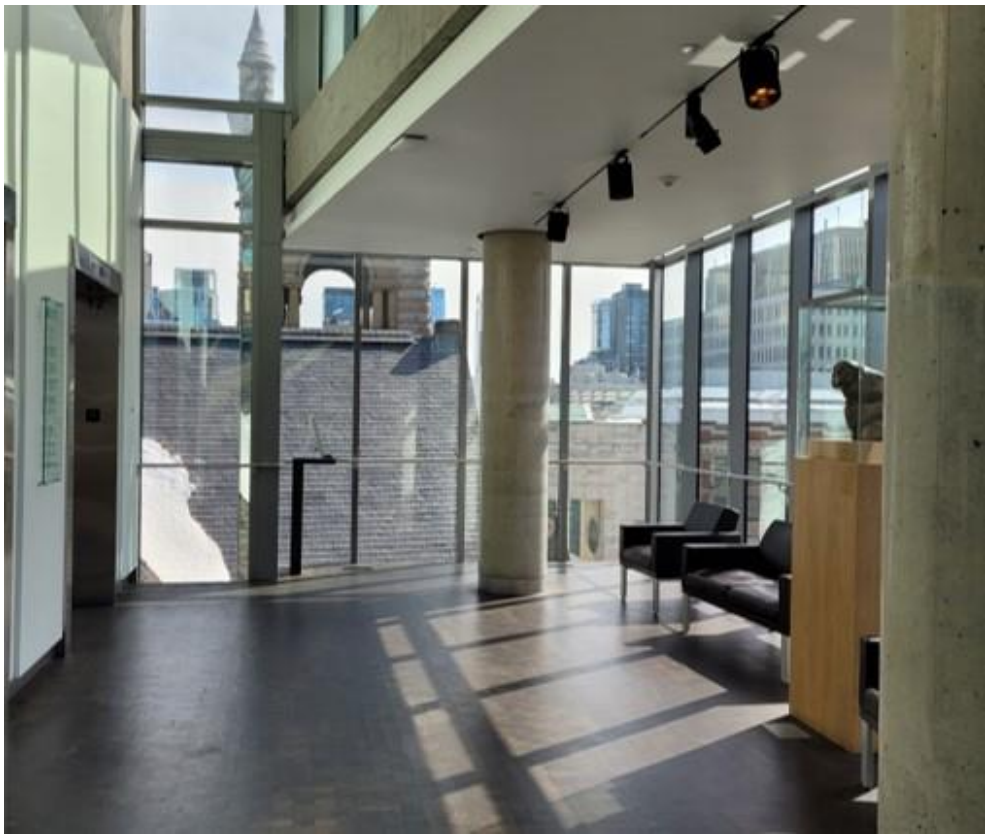

Figure 3. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, 4th floor—Rest Area, 2023. Photo by Audrey Robillard.

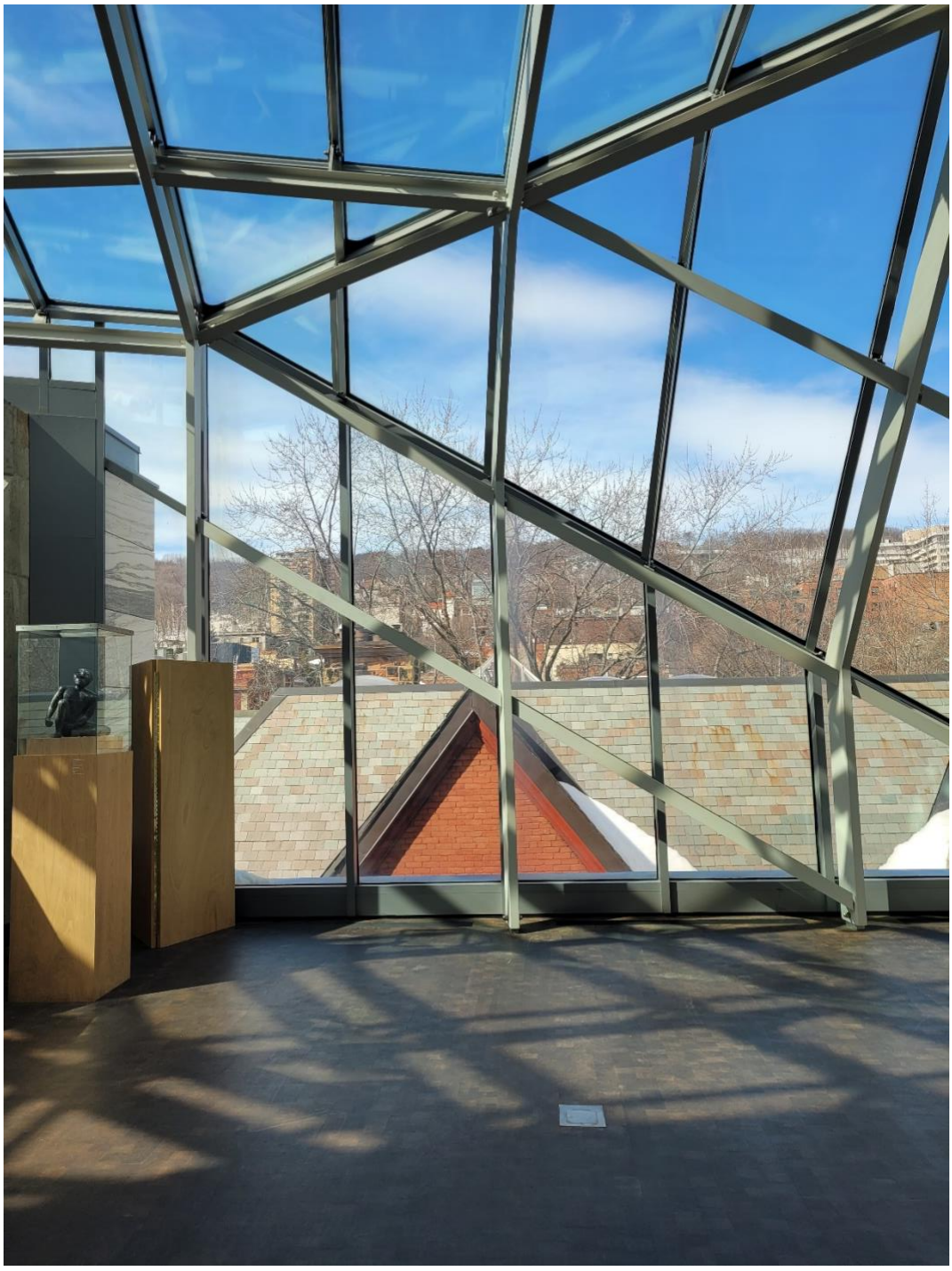

Figure 4. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, 4th floor—Views of the Mount Royal, 2023. Photo by Audrey Robillard.

Figure 5. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion — Avenue du Musée, *Provencher Roy*, n. d. Photo by Marc Cramer. https://provencherroy.ca/fr/projet/architecture-mbam-pavillon-dart-quebecois-et-canadien-claire-et-marc-bourgie/

Figure 6. Erskine and American United Church, 2003. Photo by the Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec.

Figure 7. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion—Dissected Virtual view of the relationship between the pavilion and the church, *Provencher Roy*, n.d. https://provencherroy.ca/fr/projet/architecture-mbam-pavillon-dart-quebecois-et-canadien-claire-et-marc-bourgie/

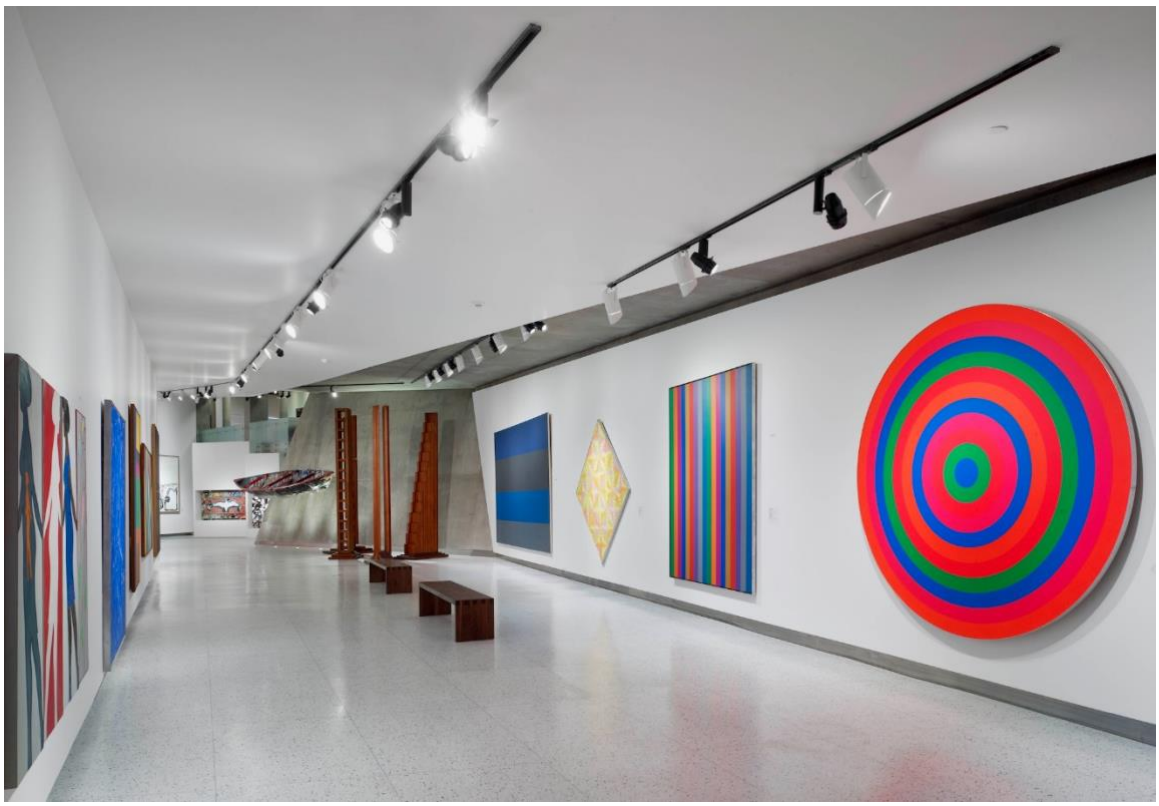

Figure 8. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, Level 2 “Expanding Field” exhibition, n.d. Photo by Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Figure 9. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion—Side View, *Provencher Roy*, n.d. (Photo credits: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts) https://provencherroy.ca/fr/projet/architecture-mbam-pavillon-dart-quebecois-et-canadien-claire-et-marc-bourgie/

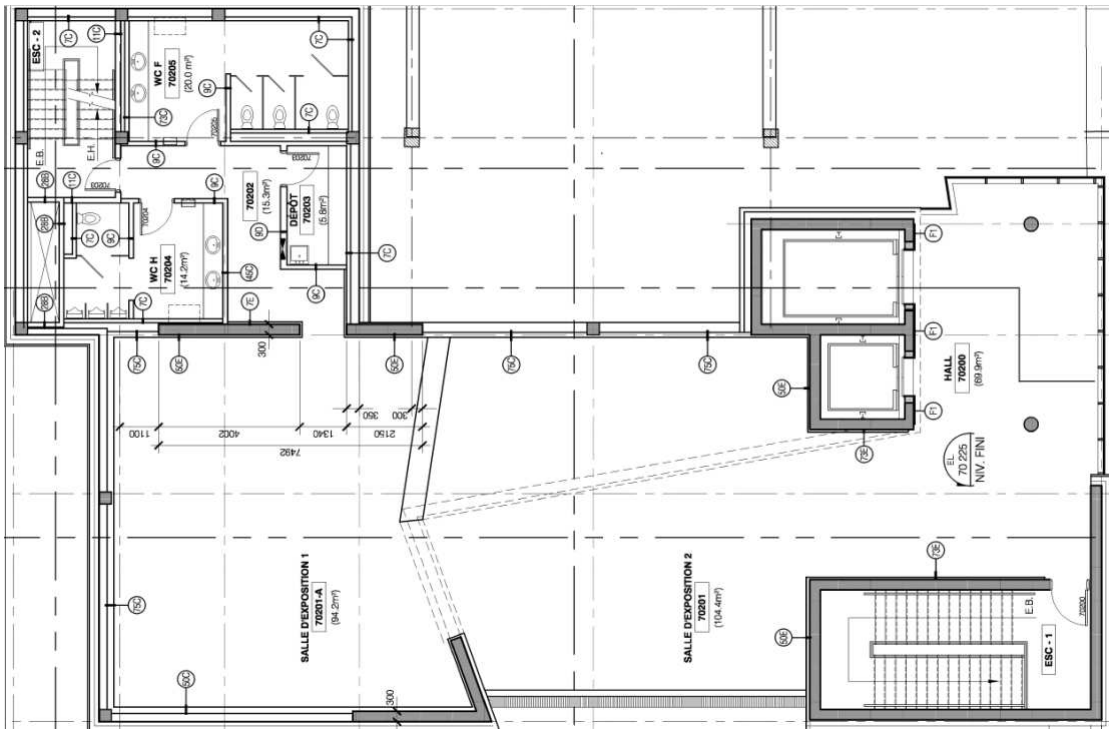

Figure 10. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, 4th floor—Floorplan, 2014. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

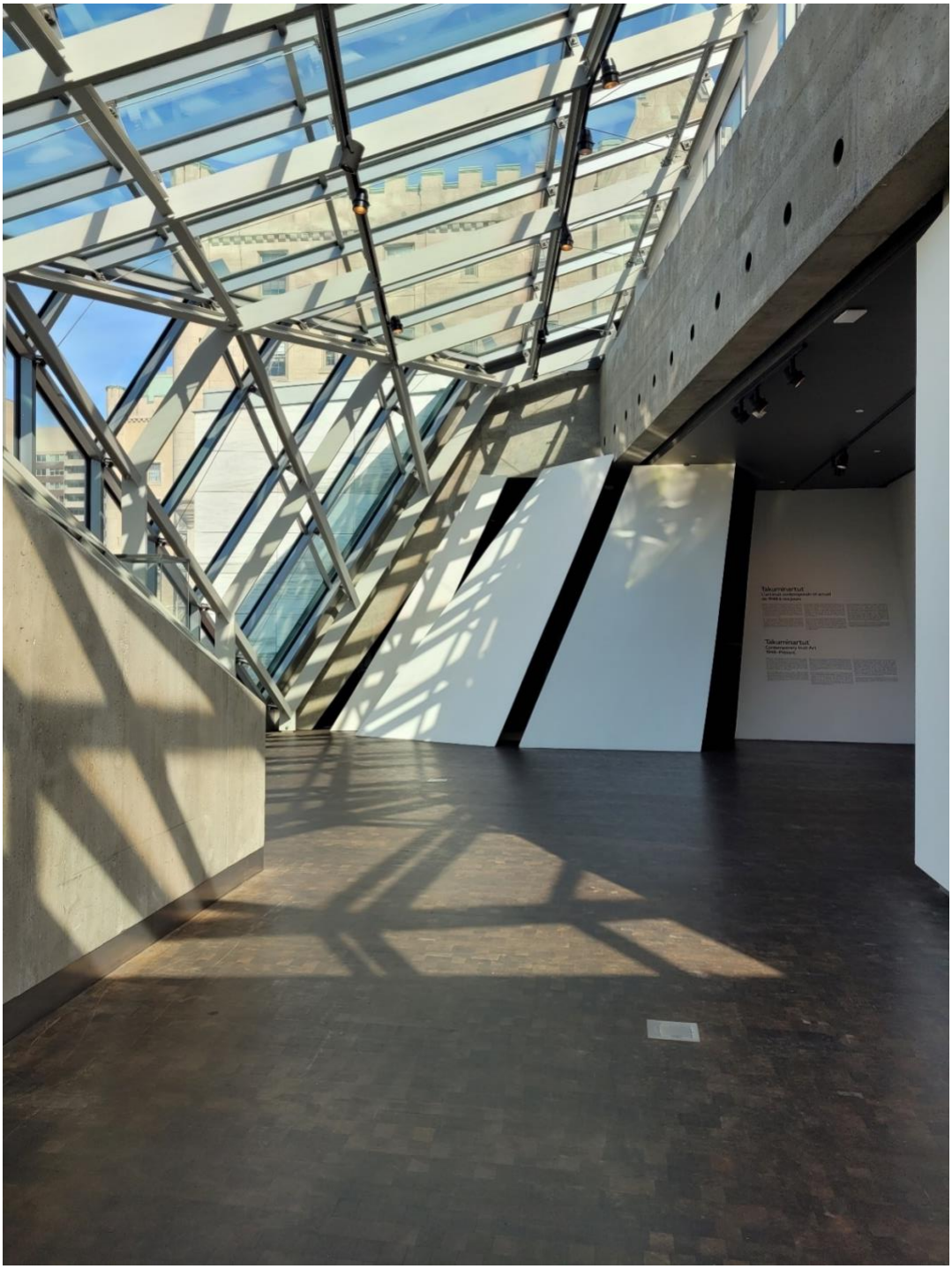

Figure 11. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, 4th floor—Path to the atrium, 2022. Photo by Audrey Robillard.

Figure 12. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, 4th floor—Inuit sculptures in the atrium, 2023. Photo by Audrey Robillard.

Figure 13. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, 4th floor—Lone sculpture in the glassed-in atrium, 2023. Photo by Audrey Robillard.

Figure 14. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, 4th floor—Inclined white panels, 2023. Photo by Audrey Robillard.

Figure 15. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, “Takuminartut” entrance, 2022. Photo by Audrey Robillard.

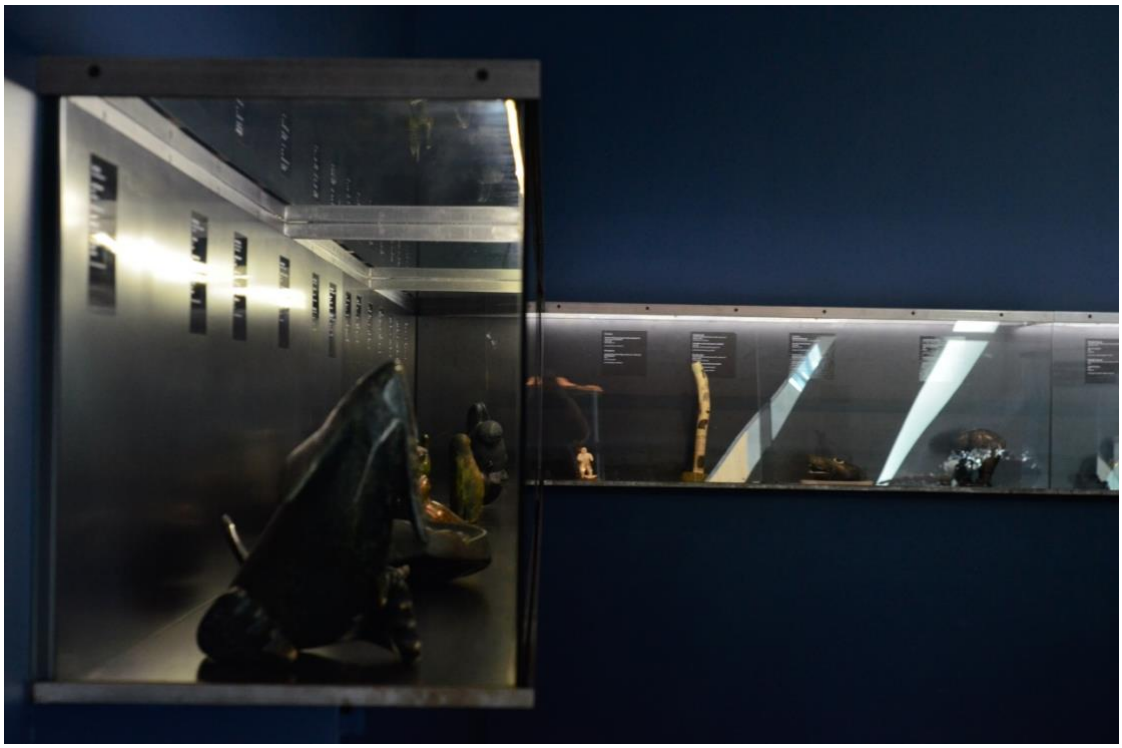

Figure 16–17. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, Exhibition space—Glass cases, 2023. Photos by Audrey Robillard.

Figure 18-19. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, Exhibition space—Prints, 2022. Photos by Audrey Robillard.

Figure 20. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, Exhibition space—Dedication to Hydro-Québec, 2022. Photo by Audrey Robillard.

Figure 21. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, Shary Boyle's installation *Changing Sea*, 2015. Photo by Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

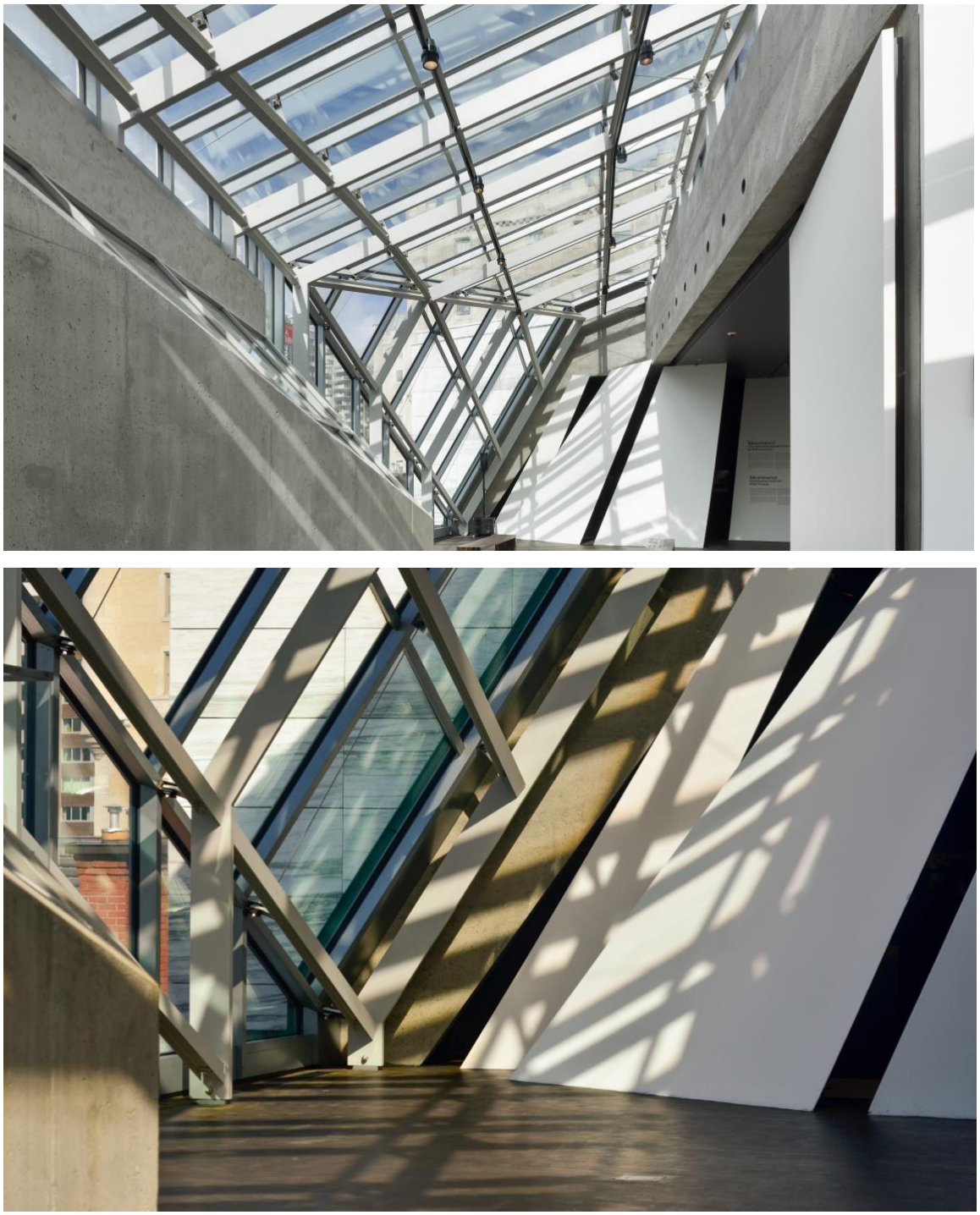

Figure 22–23. Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, 4th floor—Glassed-in atrium, 2023. Photos by Audrey Robillard.