Possibilities of Public Art as an Agent of Renewal and Resistance in Pointe-Saint-Charles

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Abstract

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This thesis explores understudied public art histories in the traditionally working-class neighbourhood of Pointe-Saint-Charles in Montreal, Québec, Canada. As a community, Pointe-Saint-Charles has a strong history of grassroots, place-based activism. Deindustrialization, top-down urban renewal, and shifting patterns of gentrification have impacted this neighbourhood in distinct ways, necessitating community-led solutions. Drawing on critical frameworks theorizing the entanglement of public art and processes of urban change, as well as community-authored historical sources specific to Pointe-Saint-Charles, this thesis aims to explore how actors within public art practices, such as artists, funders, and residents, negotiate a sense of place (Massey) within urban change. How can these different perspectives illuminate the sites and stakes surrounding public art in this neighbourhood? By exploring the conditions of commissioning, creation, and reception surrounding four public artworks installed or created over the last 50 years, this study reveals collective, personal, and political narratives of place, urban change and community spirit in a very unique neighbourhood in Canada. Informed by Elaine Speight's concept of "place-listening," this thesis proposes new methodologies that weave together the situated knowledge (Haraway) of long-term residents with archival research to resist dominant narratives of place, in favour of situated perspectives in Pointe-Saint-Charles.

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I would like to extend my warmest thanks to my supervisor, Cynthia Imogen Hammond. Thank you for your endless generosity, kindness, and academic rigour. Thank you for always encouraging me to trust my instincts and for your guidance at every stage of this work. Your commitments as a scholar and artist are inspiring and your mentorship has had a tremendous impact on the researcher, artist and writer I am today. I am so grateful for everything you have taught me about this special neighbourhood.

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Thank you to Cam from the Saint-Henri Historical Society for sitting with me on many an occasion to go through the archives of *La Voix populaire*. This collection was saved from a dumpster by the SHHS and are the closest thing to a complete archive of this important community newspaper. This speaks to the commitment of this organization to preserving the histories of Southwest Montreal, for which I am so thankful.

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To my husband, Corey. Thank you for walking with me in our neighbourhood any time in any weather. Your unwavering confidence in me never fails to give me the perspective I need.

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List of Abbreviations

UK- United Kingdom

BAP- Bureau d'art public

PACC- Pointe Action Citizens' Council

HLM- Habitation à loyer modéré

OPA- People's Urban Planning Project

PPP - Poétiser l'esPace Public

CN- Canadian National

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Introduction

The June 2005 issue of *La Voix populaire,* a local newspaper in Southwest Montreal, features a photograph of a local citizen holding a sign, which reads, "THIS 'ART' DOES NOT BELONG HERE !!"[1] (fig. 1). This powerful photograph by Martin A. Chamberland accompanies an article about a controversial, new, public artwork that was installed in the traditionally working-class neighbourhood of Pointe-Saint-Charles in Montreal, Québec, Canada. If the photograph was not enough, the title of the *Voix populaire* article makes it clear that residents did not unanimously embrace the new artwork.[2] It would be easy to disregard this photograph and article in a small, community newspaper as being outside the purview of art historical concerns. However, this discord points to important differences between municipal and community ideals surrounding which art and culture belong in public spaces in Pointe-Saint-Charles as this postindustrial sector undergoes shifting patterns of gentrification.[3] Public art is often thought of as being "for" the publics that surround it.[4] Yet this photographic trace of one citizen's protest highlights a tension that merits further investigation of the public art in "the Pointe" (as the neighbourhood is often called). This thesis explores understudied public art histories in this neighbourhood and proposes new methodologies for understanding the ties between art, place, and community.

As a community, Pointe-Saint-Charles has a strong history of place-based activism.[5] In

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[1] Mathieu R. Perron, " Une nouvelle oeuvre d'art ne fait pas l'unanimité," *La Voix populaire*, June 19, 2005.
[2] Perron.
[3] There are a few different spellings used in Pointe-Saint-Charles, primarily due to language. Following scholar Simon Vickers in his article, "From Balconville to Condoville, but Where Is Co-Opville? Neighbourhood Activism in 1980s Pointe-Saint-Charles," I will use the officially recognized spelling throughout this thesis when writing in my own words.
[4] Martin Zebracki, Rob Vaart, and Irina Aalst, "Deconstructing Public Artopia: Situating Public-Art Claims Within Practice," *Geoforum* 41 (September 1, 2010): 794, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2010.04.011.
[5] Steven High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022), 250, 251.

the aftermath of deindustrialization, felt most intensely in the Southwest neighbourhoods between the late 1960s and 1980s, many working-class neighbourhoods in Montreal struggled with poor housing conditions, few employment options, and a type of top-down urban renewal that characterized neoliberal city planning in Montreal in the 1960s.[6] Citizens of Pointe-Saint-Charles were aware that the city had razed nearby working-class neighbourhoods such as Goose Village and likewise much of Little Burgundy. These disasters emboldened the Pointe's residents to organize long-standing mutual aid systems to address safety, housing, healthcare, food security, education, and to counter displacement and gentrification.[7] These efforts also included programs dedicated to local heritage, calling attention to the area's remarkable cache of vernacular architecture and traditional nineteenth-century streetscapes.

This same architecture and streetscapes have attracted private developers since the turn of the millennium, while the neighbourhood's appeal is further heightened by its proximity to the revitalized Lachine Canal and Montreal's bustling downtown business core. Over the last two decades, the Pointe has changed as a result of numerous condominium megaprojects and drastic increases in housing prices and rental costs. In contrast, in 1996, Pointe-Saint-Charles had the highest percentage of affordable housing per capita in Canada (40%).[8] Today, the percentage of condominiums has surpassed that of social and community housing.[9] This disparity has caused

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[6] Simon Vickers, "From Balconville to Condoville, but Where Is Co-Opville? Neighbourhood Activism in 1980s Pointe-Saint-Charles," *Labour/Le Travail* 81 (2018): 162, https://doi.org/10.1353/llt.2018.0005; Steven High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022), 176,177.

[7] Kruzynski Anna et al., *The Point Is… Grassroots Organizing Works: Women from Point St. Charles Sharing Stories of Solidarity* (Montreal: Éditions du remue-ménage, 2006).

[8] Comité habitation Sud-Ouest, "Construire un espace équitable ou comment gérer la revitilisation" (Le Regroupement Information Logement de Pointe-Saint-Charles, 2002), https://ocpm.qc.ca/sites/ocpm.qc.ca/files/pdf/P90/8.2_ril_2175.pdf.

[9] Hassan El Asri and Arnaud Chauvet, "Portrait de l'habitation à Pointe-Saint-Charles" (La Corporation de développement communautaire (CDC) Action-Gardien, le Regroupement Information Logement (RIL), April 2021), 57, http://www.actiongardien.org/blog/2022/01/19/etudehabitation_2011-2016.

the displacement of long-term traditional residents and jeopardized the social fabric of this neighbourhood.

Urbanist Hélène Bélanger links the sense of exclusion felt by traditional, often working-class residents of Southwest Montreal to the shifting use of public space in gentrifying, formerly industrial neighbourhoods. She explains that urban renewal efforts tend to rebrand public space in order to draw new, wealthier occupants.[10] Similar claims have been made with regard to the capacity of public art to participate in the re-imagining of cities,[11] in the interpretation and re-interpretation of history,[12] and in urban regeneration itself.[13] Art historian Rosalyn Deutsche has argued that public art can participate in spatial processes such as gentrification, offering support to capitalist redevelopment by making certain areas more "appealing." Deutsche also asserts, however, that public art can provide a means of resistance against these forces.[14]

Art historian Johanne Sloan suggests that consideration of "urban art histories" in Canada, focusing on the territorial specificities of cities, rather than a national arts context, merits art historical attention on the basis that cities are not empty backdrops for artistic activity.[15] Rather, artistic activity is enmeshed in patterns of "urban change, in discourses of degeneration and regeneration, in modes of street-level behaviour and everyday interaction, in

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[10] Hélène Bélanger, "Pour qui et à qui ce parc ? Gentrification et appropriation de l'espace public dans l'arrondissement du Sud-Ouest de Montréal (Canada)," *Lien social et Politiques*, no. 63 (2010): 143–54, https://doi.org/10.7202/044156ar.
[11] Joanne Sharp, Venda Pollock, and Ronan Paddison, "Just Art for a Just City: Public Art and Social Inclusion in Urban Regeneration," *Urban Studies* 42, no. 5–6 (May 1, 2005): 1001, https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980500106963.
[12] Tony Bovaird, "Public Art in Urban Regeneration An Economic Assessment," *On the W@terfront*, September 1998, 10.
[13] Tim Hall and Iain Robertson, "Public Art and Urban Regeneration: Advocacy, Claims and Critical Debates," *Landscape Research* 26, no. 1 (January 1, 2001): 5, https://doi.org/10.1080/01426390120024457.
[14] Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 56, https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262540971/evictions/.
[15] Johanne Sloan, "Urban Artworlds (in Canada)," in *Narratives Unfolding: National Art Histories in an Unfinished World*, McGill-Queen's/Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation Studies in Art History (Montreal ; McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 286, https://www.deslibris.ca/ID/452374.

collective memories and desires," necessitating interdisciplinary methodologies that grapple with urban theory.[16] In parallel, Annie Gérin's introduction to *Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives* proposes a "territorial and temporal analysis" of public art, which takes into account the time, place, and space that a work of public art occupies, as well as its formal qualities.[17] Considering intentions (those of the artist and the patron) as well as the way audiences relate to the work can reveal how public art contributes to what Henri Lefebvre called "the production of space" at particular moments in time.[18] In *The Production of Space* (1991), Lefebvre argues that space is socially produced; a temporal and territorial analysis thus has the potential to illuminate the social relationality surrounding public art in public spaces.[19] In this thesis, I extend what Johanne Sloan terms the methodological enigma of urban art histories, in this case, a public art history, to the scale of a neighbourhood, aiming to explore the understudied role of public art in the temporal and territorial conditions of Pointe-Saint-Charles.

Scholars have studied Pointe-Saint-Charles in terms of deindustrialization, activism, class, heritage, public memory, housing, working-class women's history, and the politics of sound in this postindustrial setting.[20] In much of this scholarship, community-authored sources

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[16] Sloan, 287.
[17] Annie Gérin and James S. McLean, *Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 5,6.
[18] Gérin and McLean, 4.
[19] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).
[20] Cynthia Imogen Hammond, "The Keystone of the Neighbourhood: Gender, Collective Action, and Working-Class Heritage Strategy in Pointe-Saint-Charles, Montreal," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 52, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 108–48, https://doi.org/doi:10.3138/JCS.2017-0043.R1; Piyusha Chatterjee and Steven High, "The Deindustrialisation of Our Senses: Residual and Dominant Soundscapes in Montreal's Point Saint-Charles District," in *Telling Environmental Histories*, ed. Katie Holmes and Heather Goodall (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2017), 179–210, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-63772-3; Muriel Luderowski, "Sound, Deindustrialization, and Gentrification: The Changing Aural Landscape of Pointe-Saint-Charles" (masters, Concordia University, 2017), https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/id/eprint/982201/; Steven High et al., *La Pointe: L'autre bord de la track*. Audiowalk. (Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, 2015), https://storytelling.concordia.ca/projects-item/la-pointe-the-other-side-of-the-tracks/; Simon Vickers, "From Balconville to Condoville, but Where Is Co-

and oral history interviews have been vital to understanding the distinct and entwined experiences of deindustrialization and grassroots community organizing in Pointe-Saint-Charles. Toxic residue from industrial activity and deteriorating housing stock paired with increasing factory closings during the postwar period and resulting unemployment made for difficult living conditions in the Pointe. By 1960, much of the housing remained cold flats, fire hazards posed safety issues, neglect by slumlords was prevalent, and parks and sidewalks were unsafe and poorly lit.[21] Healthcare and social services were scarcely available, and there were few options for public transportation until the late 70s, contributing to the relative isolation of the Pointe from the rest of the city. Inaction by the City of Montreal compounded this isolation, and the neighbourhood was "profoundly neglected."[22] However, this hardship also fostered longstanding community and class solidarity systems. Grassroots community actions led to the establishment of the essential services that the city was not providing, often with working-class women at the helm.[23] Books such as *The Point is… Grassroots Organizing Works: Women from Point St. Charles sharing stories of solidarity* (2006) feature oral histories detailing these bottom-up triumphs, especially those of activist women in the Pointe who also dealt with added barriers of patriarchal oppression and gender-based violence.[24] More recently, interviews with newer and

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Opville? Neighbourhood Activism in 1980s Pointe-Saint-Charles," *Labour/Le Travail* 81 (2018): 159–86, https://doi.org/10.1353/llt.2018.0005; Kruzynski et al., *The Point Is… Grassroots Organizing Works: Women from Point St. Charles Sharing Stories of Solidarity*; Steven High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022).

[21] Kruzynski et al., *The Point Is… Grassroots Organizing Works: Women from Point St. Charles Sharing Stories of Solidarity*, 29–79.

[22] Kruzynski et al., 59.

[23] Kruzynski et al., *The Point Is… Grassroots Organizing Works: Women from Point St. Charles Sharing Stories of Solidarity*; High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.*, 11. During the 1960s and 1970s in Pointe-Saint-Charles, community wide mobilization efforts led to many "firsts" in Quebec, such as the first federally subsidized co-operative housing iniative and the first community health clinic.

[24] Kruzynski et al., To name a few examples, activist women in the Pointe fought for traffic infrastructure, safer public spaces, and in 1973, played a critical role in successfully opposing a highway proposed by the city that would

traditional residents have examined the implications of the Pointe's shifting identity as vestiges of industry become increasingly residual.[25] Piyusha Chatterjee and Steven High have described this shift as a "spatially uneven process."[26]

The role that public art has played in recent shifts in the neighbourhood's public, and its public spaces has not yet, however, been given critical attention. Inspired by this rich body of interdisciplinary scholarship and also, by the seven years I have spent living in the Pointe, I have chosen to analyze four artworks installed or created over the last five decades. These are: *Sublime* (1978) by Maurice Lemieux, a steel sculptural work located in front of a social housing complex; *Monument à la Pointe* (2001) by Gilles Mihalcean, a mixed-media sculpture that faces a converted factory; *Le Village imaginé* (2005) by Pierre Bourgault, compromised of multiple sculptural elements installed in a park; and *La Pointe All-Dress* (2013), a community mural on the side of a train viaduct, painted by Collectif au pied du mur in collaboration with over 200 volunteers and youth.

These four works do not represent a complete survey of public art in this neighbourhood. However, I focus on this selection because *Sublime, Monument à la Pointe* and *Le Village imaginé* are all publicly-commissioned works linked in different ways to urban development projects, while *La Pointe All-Dress* is a community mural that depicts a history of deindustrialization and place-based activism in Pointe-Saint-Charles (fig. 2). These spatial and social contexts offer a starting point to explore perspectives from different actors within public

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have bulldozed a portion of the neighbourhood. See also Cynthia Imogen Hammond, "The Keystone of the Neighbourhood: Gender, Collective Action, and Working-Class Heritage Strategy in Pointe-Saint-Charles, Montreal," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 52, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 108–48, https://doi.org/doi:10.3138/JCS.2017-0043.R1

[25] Chatterjee and High, "The Deindustrialisation of Our Senses: Residual and Dominant Soundscapes in Montreal's Point Saint-Charles District"; Luderowski, "Sound, Deindustrialization, and Gentrification."

[26] Chatterjee and High, 180.

art practices (such as artists, patrons, and residents) and connections between urban change and public art in this neighbourhood. Another motivation for this study is that each piece has also received minimal, if any, art historical analysis to date.

Following Deutsche, I initially asked how these four public artworks might either resist or inadvertently participate in the increasingly gentrified urban landscape of Pointe-Saint-Charles. I came to find, however, that this binary question could not account for the complex and sometimes contradictory ways that public art is entangled with processes of urban change. My investigation into the conditions surrounding each piece's commissioning, creation, and reception revealed nuanced narratives of place and public art, complicating any conclusive answers to my initial question. After all, a sense of place is, as Doreen Massey reminds us, often in flux and varies across positionalities.[27]

According to Massey, place is defined by a constellation of social relations "meeting and weaving together."[28] These social relations are what give place its specificity. Conceptualizing place in this way also resists a fixed, absolute definition.[29] This thesis thus aims to explore how actors within public art practices, such as artists, funders, and residents, negotiate a sense of place in Pointe-Saint-Charles. How can these different perspectives illuminate the sites and stakes surrounding public art in this neighbourhood? While a formal art historical analysis of each artwork is certainly warranted, I am most interested in how the *meaning* of public art practices can be understood through the study of its site and the perspectives of its audiences. Thus, the conditions of commissioning, creation, and reception surrounding each of my four

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[27] Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge : Polity, 1994), 52, 153, http://archive.org/details/spaceplacegender0000mass.
[28] Massey, 155.
[29] Massey, 155.

chosen artworks have the potential to reveal collective, personal, and political narratives of place, urban change and community spirit in a very unique neighbourhood in Canada.

Before expanding on methodology, it's crucial to emphasize the significance of place and community in shaping a critical perspective within the field of public art history. In her foundational book, *Mapping the Terrain*: *New Genre Public Art,* Suzanne Lacy identifies a shift in the 1960s towards public art that prioritized engagement with an intended audience. Lacy coined the term, "new genre public art" to mark this tendency.[30] In her contribution to this same volume, Lucy Lippard defines public art as an "accessible work of any kind that cares about, challenges, involves, and consults the audience for or with whom it is made, respecting community and environment."[31] She follows this definition with a tentative and fluid list of "'outlooking' art about place" With the word "outlooking," Lippard implies that this list describes artwork that exists in and engages with space outside of the art gallery or museum. A categorical example from this list is traditional, officially funded public art (located often in parks and plazas, or in less expected places like stores, streets and residential neighbourhoods), which draws attention to the character and function of its location. Another is site-specific participatory work that involves a local community, such as a mural.[32] With this broad and overlapping list, Lippard attempts to account for art that is in some way public and relates to places, including the social histories and current contexts of those places.[33]

Mapping the Terrain prompted interest in public art as a critical practice and marks an attitudinal shift, particularly in the United Kingdom, where research institutions came to view

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[30] Suzanne Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Bay Press, 1995), 19.
[31] Lacy, 121.
[32] Lacy, 121,122.
[33] Lacy, 121–23.

public art as a critical practice and an "agent of urban change."[34] Beginning in the 1990s, these contributions to the discourse initiated an era where UK governments perceived public art to be a tool by which tangible goals within the city environment, community, and economy could be achieved.[35] Public art, therefore, became "useful" in a novel way. It was hoped that public art might support or even propel urban change in cities and towns undergoing renewal.[36] Essentially, art had the potential to counter the homogenization of new developments and make places attractive by highlighting their distinct identities,[37] drawing new, potentially wealthier residents to postindustrial areas.[38] By highlighting meaningful place-identities[39] and distinct characteristics, art was perceived to be a cost-effective way to generate a sense of place and local distinctiveness within regeneration projects. Further, participatory forms of public art were employed to address social exclusion, particularly by the New Labour government.[40] Public art was thus harnessed as a tool for "place-making," a term used as shorthand to describe these practices within regeneration processes.[41] In British, American and Canadian contexts, scholars have questioned what is gained and what is lost through creative place-making.[42] The

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[34] Elaine Speight, "Listening in Certain Places: Public Art for the Post-Regenerate Age," in *The Everyday Practice of Public Art: Art, Space, and Social Inclusion* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 181, https://www-taylorfrancis-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/pdfviewer/.
[35] Speight, 181.
[36] Urban regeneration is a term commonly used in the UK. The equivalent term in Canada is urban renewal, and I will use both throughout this thesis. Elaine Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" *Open Arts Journal*, no. 1 (2013): 26, https://doi.org/10.5456/issn.5050-3679/2013s04es.
[37] Charles Landry et al., *Urban Renewal through Cultural Activity* (Comedia, 1996), 3.
[38] Speight, 26.
[39] Charles Landry et al., *Urban Renewal through Cultural Activity* (Comedia, 1996), 3.
[40] Venda Louise Pollock and Ronan Paddison, "On Place-Making, Participation and Public Art: The Gorbals, Glasgow," *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability* 7, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 88, 89, https://doi.org/10.1080/17549175.2013.875057; Elaine Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 26.
[41] Speight, "Listening in Certain Places : Public Art for the Post-Regenerate Age," 181.
[42] Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!'"; Maggie Hutcheson, "Making Place Work: Site-Specific Socially Engaged Art in 21st Century Toronto" (Toronto, York

malleability of creative place-making, which Anne Gadwa Nicodemus has referred to as a "fuzzy concept," means it can at times be coded to support gentrification over social equity.[43]

In this thesis, I am interested in how a critical place-making framework might illuminate other postindustrial places undergoing renewal, such as Pointe-Saint-Charles. Elaine Speight's method of "place-listening" has also informed the ways I investigate these patterns. As an alternative to place-making in public art practices, Speight has developed a place-listening method while working on a curatorial project titled *Palimpsest* in the postindustrial town of West Bromwich in the UK. Arts programming responding to a significant redevelopment scheme had largely framed the town as a passive victim of corporate exploitation, yet this characterization did not reflect the sentiments of local residents. Speight found that these artistic portrayals of West Bromwich overrode local forms of agency.[44] Through place-listening, Speight aimed to acknowledge narratives of place that might be overlooked by place-making, instead focusing on how residents "negotiated the town's redevelopment and expressed a sense of place against the backdrop of such profound change."[45] She defines place-listening as an embodied and situated commitment to place. Through embodied methods such as urban walking and open-ended walking interviews with local residents, place-listening is a means by which to investigate how places are experienced collectively and individually.[46] Above all, place-listening seeks to challenge an essentialist conception of place, which emphasizes a singular, fixed place identity,

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University, 2014), http://hdl.handle.net/10315/30061; Jamie Peck, "Struggling with the Creative Class," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, no. 4 (2005): 740–70, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2005.00620.x; Anne Gadwa Nicodemus, "Fuzzy Vibrancy: Creative Placemaking as Ascendant US Cultural Policy," *Cultural Trends* 22, no. 3–4 (2013): 213–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2013.817653.

[43] Nicodemus, "Fuzzy Vibrancy," 214.

[44] Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 30.

[45] Speight, 30.

[46] Speight, 29, 30, 31.

in favour of one that is ongoing and contingent.[47] Informed by Doreen Massey's concept of a "global sense of place,"[48] Speight suggests that an alternative arts approach such as place-listening is necessary when the notion of place is considered to be a meeting point of social relations, rather than something essential and fixed.[49]

I thus frame my methodology as a research practice adjacent to place-listening, combining oral history interviews with archival primary research. Oral history has been essential to scholarship honouring working-class history, community resistance, and women's activism in Pointe-Saint-Charles and other Southwest Montreal neighbourhoods, and this has inspired my research.[50] More broadly, I have come to understand the oral history interview as a well-established tool to learn about the built environment and public space. Given that public art is part of public space, the potential for oral history to illuminate the ways in which public art holds meaning for residents is then key to understanding the role of public art in a gentrifying neighbourhood.

Further, the collaborative nature of the oral history interview and its capacity to "redefine and redistribute intellectual authority" are pillars of this methodology.[51] Oral historian Michael Frisch first coined the term "a shared authority" in 1990, emphasizing how the power to articulate and interpret history does not lie solely in the hands of the oral historian or interviewer

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[47] Speight, 26, 27.
[48] Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 156.
[49] Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 28.
[50] Here, I am referring to the following sources: Steven High et al., *La Pointe: L'autre bord de la track*. Audiowalk. (Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, 2015), https://storytelling.concordia.ca/projects-item/la-pointe-the-other-side-of-the-tracks/; Shauna Janssen, "Urban Occupations Urbaines: Curating the Post-Industrial Landscape" (phd, Concordia University, 2014), https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/id/eprint/978384/; Kruzynski et al., *The Point is… Grassroots Organizing Works: Women from Point St. Charles sharing stories of solidarity.*
[51] Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (State University of New York Press, 1990), xx.

but is shared.[52] As oral historian Stacey Zembrzycki has modelled by shifting her research methods to collaborate with her grandmother as an interviewee and co-interviewer, there is no fixed map to sharing authority. Rather, dialogue must shape and transform the research at every stage.[53] In this thesis, I aim to recognize a shared authority by exploring personal narratives of public art and place in the Pointe through five semi-structured interviews with six long-term residents of the neighbourhood, which I conducted between October 27th, 2022, and January 30th, 2023. "Long-term resident" in this case refers to interviewees who have lived in the neighbourhood for a significant amount of time, ranging from fourteen years to an interviewee whose family has lived in the neighbourhood for generations. I connected with my interviewees by sharing a public callout with local community groups and in a newsletter run by Action-Gardien, an organization that connects community groups and services. The call invited any interested resident of the Pointe to be interviewed on their perspectives about public art. I also sought participants through personal correspondence with residents where a prior social connection existed. Most of the resulting interviews were with individuals engaged in personal creative practices and/or community work in the Southwest borough.

Weather permitting, I conducted the interviews as outdoor, walking interviews, allowing my interviewees and myself to view the works of public art in question, in situ, but without following a prescribed path through the neighbourhood. The geography of Pointe-Saint-Charles is well suited to walking; it is possible to walk from one end of the neighbourhood to the other in

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[52] Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*; Michael Frisch, "Sharing Authority: Oral History and the Collaborative Process," *The Oral History Review* 30, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 111–13, https://doi.org/10.1525/ohr.2003.30.1.111; Linda Shopes, "Commentary - Sharing Authority," *The Oral History Review* 30, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 105, https://doi.org/10.1525/ohr.2003.30.1.103.
[53] Stacey Zembrzycki, "Sharing Authority with Baba," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43, no. 1 (January 2009): 233, https://doi.org/10.3138/jcs.43.1.219.

about forty minutes. In the development of place-listening as a method, Speight found that the embodied practice of walking with others could reveal emotional, temporal, geographical, and social connections that contribute to a sense of place. [54] These connections relate to the concept of situated knowledge. Defined by Donna Haraway as a feminist objectivity, situated knowledge is embodied knowledge that embraces the inextricable ties between subject and object.[55] Zebracki, Vaart, and Aalst have likewise highlighted the importance of learning from the situated knowledge of public art producers, including residents' personal perceptions. Interviews can situate public art in "geographical as well as temporal dimensions."[56] In the case of my interviews, public art was the object of study. The insights and situated knowledge shared with me by my interviewees are foundational to this thesis.

Alongside these interviews, I undertook extensive primary research in various archives to situate the four public artworks within the temporal and geographical specificities of Pointe-Saint-Charles. Documents at the Archives populaires de Pointe-Saint-Charles (a community archive held at McGill University dedicated to preserving the archival heritage of the Pointe, below referred to as the Archives populaires), the City of Montreal's Bureau d'art public (BAP), and articles from a local Southwest newspaper, *La Voix populaire* (the archives of which were saved from a dumpster by the Saint Henri Historical Society), allowed me to uncover multiple perspectives and key information linked to public art practices in the Pointe.[57]

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[54] Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 31.
[55] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 582, 583, https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066.
[56] Zebracki, Vaart, and Aalst, "Deconstructing Public Artopia," 787.
[57] Examples of archival documents I consulted include proposals for planned public commissions by artists, internal documents that share names and positionalities of a selection jury, and documents from community groups expressing their views on planned public commissions.

In order to situate myself in these methodological choices, and in the Pointe, I'd like to state that I am white settler from the suburbs of Montreal where I grew up with my mother and father, second-generation children of German and Slovenian immigrants respectively. I became better acquainted with the city during my CEGEP and university studies. After living in a few different neighbourhoods, motivated by my art-student budget, in 2016 I rented an apartment in in Pointe-Saint-Charles, a home I quickly came to love. In my art and architectural history studies, I found that to learn about the built environment in the Pointe is to learn from legacies of colonialism, industrialization, community, solidarity, activism, and hardship. As an uninvited guest in Tiohtía:ke (Montreal), the unceded lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) Nation, which Pointe-Saint-Charles occupies, I benefit from these legacies, including the labour of many industrial workers and activists who shaped the Pointe. As the neighbourhood becomes more gentrified, I share in the responsibility of maintaining a local, anti-capitalist spirit that has made this a livable neighbourhood. Part of that responsibility lies in my art historical work, which means ensuring that the voices of this neighbourhood are fundamental to my analysis of its public art.

I have thus aimed in this thesis to learn from the perspectives of community groups and long-term residents in my study of public art history in the Pointe. I have divided my thesis into two chapters: my first chapter explores evidence from the aforementioned archival sources and scholarship devoted to the Pointe, public art, and place-making in order to investigate four key sites in the neighbourhood. Three of these sites are the locations of public commissions *Sublime, Monument à la Pointe* and *Le Village imaginé.* In Chapter Two, I focus on a final case study, the community mural *La Pointe All-Dress.* I then elaborate on my approach to place-listening, oral history, and the findings shared with me by long-term residents, which have deepened my

understanding of public art in Pointe-Saint-Charles. By bringing together oral history, urban studies and art history, I aim to explore a new approach to the understudied public art histories in this neighbourhood.

Chapter One: Place-making in Pointe-Saint-Charles

In this chapter, I look at the development of four key places in the Pointe, three of which are sites of publicly-commissioned artwork. First, I briefly discuss the Lachine Canal linear park, a state-led project that illustrates the ways in which urban renewal has favoured private development over the needs of a traditionally working-class population in Pointe-Saint-Charles. The state's treatment of the Lachine Canal as an industrial heritage site further complicates this dynamic, providing a basis for examining the development of other public spaces and heritage sites in the Pointe. By comparing evidence from three archival sources mentioned earlier, I then piece together narratives surrounding the development of Habitations Favard (the site of *Sublime*), the former Sherwin Williams paint factory (the adjacent site of *Monument à la Pointe*), and Marguerite Bourgeoys Park (the site of *Le Village imaginé*) as well as the commissioning, selection, and reception of each public art piece. I consider viewpoints from different actors, such as community groups, artists, and municipal funders, following what Suzanne Lacy might call a "multivocal" approach to finding meaning in public practices, thus enabling a close reading of the artwork's embeddedness in place.[58] What can this close reading tell me about the meaning of public art and place in the Pointe? Further, how are these publicly-commissioned artworks enmeshed in patterns of urban change?

We have seen that public art can be a place-making tool employed by government bodies as part of the renewal processes of postindustrial cities; this raises the question of power

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[58] Suzanne Lacy, "Time in Place: New Genre Public Art a Decade Later," in *The Practice of Public Art*, ed. Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis, Routledge Research in Cultural and Media Studies 14 (New York: Routledge, 2008), 21.

dynamics in public art practices.[59] In Venda Louise Pollock and Ronan Paddison's case study of public art and regeneration in an inner-city Glasgow neighbourhood, they examine previously industrial neighbourhoods which have experienced an economic downturn. The legacy left by industry often requires re-invention "both materially and imaginatively."[60] Pollock and Paddison ultimately find that power dynamics between actors, agencies, and institutions re-inventing these spaces require interrogation.[61] In this chapter, I aim to investigate these dynamics in relation to Pointe-Saint-Charles.

Place-making and Public Space: The Lachine Canal

Exploring the power dynamics behind the postindustrial re-invention of the Lachine Canal deepened my understanding of urban change in Pointe-Saint-Charles. This nineteenth-century industrial waterway provided transportation and hydraulic power to a growing industrial corridor in the Southwest borough, therefore playing a pivotal role in Montreal's ascendancy to a national centre of industry. [62] According to Steven High, the redevelopment of the canal after its obsolescence and eventual closure in 1971 represents a flagship state-led regeneration project for Montreal. By the late 1970s, Parks Canada began to redevelop the federally owned strips of land on each bank into a linear park and bike path. They also focused on preserving the canal's

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[59] These studies are largely focused on the UK, a notable example being the arts-led regeneration of the town of Gateshead. See also Stuart Cameron and Jon Coaffee, "Art, Gentrification and Regeneration – From Artist as Pioneer to Public Arts," *European Journal of Housing Policy* 5, no. 1 (April 1, 2005): 39–58, https://doi.org/10.1080/14616710500055687; Speight, "Listening in Certain Places : Public Art for the Post-Regenerate Age," 181.
[60] Pollock and Paddison, "On Place-Making, Participation and Public Art," 85.
[61] Pollock and Paddison, 101.
[62] Desmond Bliek and Pierre Gauthier, "Understanding the Built Form of Industrialization along the Lachine Canal in Montreal," *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire Urbaine* 35, no. 1 (2006): 5,6, https://doi.org/10.7202/1015990ar; Government of Canada Parks Canada Agency, "The Cradle of Industrialization," July 4, 2019, https://parks.canada.ca/lhn-nhs/qc/canallachine/culture/histoire-history/industrialisation. It is worth noting that the canal received the status of National Historic Site in 1929.

industrial heritage qualities and eventually re-opened the waters to pleasure craft by 2002.[63] This transformation from a space of labour to one of leisure and recreation profoundly affected the adjacent Southwest neighbourhoods already dealing with the impacts of deindustrialization.[64]

In the years following the canal's closure, the City of Montreal undertook intensive urban renewal in this area that affected each neighbourhood in distinct ways. In Pointe-Saint-Charles, this included subsidies for renovation of existing housing stock, the building of transport infrastructure and extension of the metro system, as well as liberal rezoning of industrial sites (especially along the canal's banks) for high-end condominium developments at the request of developers.[65] These renewal efforts by the city encouraged the area's marketability, and the redeveloped canal served as powerful tool for developers seeking to attract a more affluent population.[66] Through this process of "condoization,"[67] the re-definition of the canal for leisure catalyzed gentrification in the Pointe, something that High notes working-class residents feared would lead to displacement and gentrification long before academics made this connection.[68] Further, he adds that Parks Canada's preservation and ultimate aestheticization of selected industrial infrastructure along the canal's banks obscured the impact of the city's renewal agenda. Industrial heritage, as practiced by Parks Canada, failed to acknowledge the very recent and

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[63] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.*, 222.
[64] High, 209.
[65] Hélène Bélanger, "Pour qui et à qui ce parc ? Gentrification et appropriation de l'espace public dans l'arrondissement du Sud-Ouest de Montréal (Canada)," *Lien social et Politiques*, no. 63 (2010): 143–54, https://doi.org/10.7202/044156ar; High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.*, 222.
[66] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.*, 223.
[67] "Condoization" refers to the conversion of property into condominiums. In the case of Pointe-Saint-Charles, this might refer to industrial buildings, which are rezoned residential and repurposed into condominium megaprojects. It may also refer to rental housing stock that is converted into condos or single-family dwellings. For a recent detailed portrait of housing in Pointe-Saint-Charles using the most recent (2021) census data, see El Asri, Hassan, and Arnaud Chauvet. 'Portrait de l'habitation à Pointe-Saint-Charles'. La Corporation de développement communautaire (CDC) Action-Gardien, le Regroupement Information Logement (RIL), April 2021. http://www.actiongardien.org/blog/2022/01/19/etudehabitation_2011-2016.
[68] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.*, 209, 223.

ongoing socio-economic impact on Southwest neighbourhoods and became "an integral part of the gentrification process and provided valuable political cover in the face of community resistance to the 'greening' of the Lachine Canal."[69]

By 2010, nearly a decade after municipal and federal governments reopened the canal's waters for recreational boating, the effects of gentrification were visible in the Pointe.[70] This moment finds multiple scholars asking questions about the meaning of canal's parkification for local residents. Meaningful rather than speculative answers to these questions relied on interviews with traditional residents. For example, Hélène Bélanger's exploratory study of the canal area in Pointe-Saint-Charles asked how this public space holds meaning for traditional residents and whether that meaning has changed due to the revitalization of the space.[71] An audiowalk published in 2013 featured stories from traditional residents of Montreal's Southwest. The audiowalk included Pointe-Saint-Charles resident Francine Gagnière, who shared her feelings about the publicness of the canal: "Des fois, j'ai peur que ce soient les riches qui se l'approprie, là tsé. Ce qu'on veut pas c'est qu'on face un mur, et que les condos qui viennent, ils se mettent le dos au quartier. Maintenant on peut plus passer là. On veut que les gens le voient, le canal."[72] Though these projects were not connected, this anecdote echoes Bélanger's findings. She tentatively concludes that perhaps the Lachine Canal is no longer felt to be part of a notion

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[69] High, 241.
[70] Government of Canada Parks Canada Agency, "Lachine Canal Reopening - Parks Canada - 20 Years of Recreational Navigation on the Lachine Canal: A Retrospective on a Colossal Project," June 20, 2023, https://parks.canada.ca/lhn-nhs/qc/canallachine/culture/ingenierie-engineering/reouverture-reopening.
[71] Bélanger, "Pour qui et à qui ce parc ?," 143,144.
[72] Steven High et al., *Canal: Walking the Post-Industrial Lachine Canal.*, Audiowalk (Montreal: Center for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, 2013). 45:23. https://storytelling.concordia.ca/projects-item/canal/
Author's translation: "Sometimes, I'm afraid it's the rich who will appropriate the space, you know. What we don't want is to create a wall, and for the condos that are coming to turn their back on the neighbourhood. Now we can't pass through there. We want people to see the canal."

of "chez-soi"[73] amongst traditional working-class residents, who ultimately felt less welcome in the public space of the canal after its transformation.[74]

The canal's redevelopment illustrates how interventions in public spaces in Pointe-Saint-Charles and the treatment of industrial heritage are not neutral.[75] By selectively harnessing heritage value and the notion of "public" space, the harmful impacts of the canal's deindustrialization are left out of Parks Canada's curation of historical narratives. These tactics obscured the capitalist agenda behind the redevelopment of this space, which allowed the canal to become a "zone of affluence,"[76] in contrast to one of labour and class identification.[77] Rosalyn Deutsche has written extensively on the notion of "public" space in capitalist redevelopment, suggesting that use of this rhetoric by capitalist forces can justify social exclusion as a naturally occurring difference, rather than an intentional policy.[78] She has called the appropriation of public space by forces of redevelopment a principal issue confronting all urban practices in which architecture and public art often play a role.[79] Though public art practices can be complicit in the re-imagining of spaces by capitalist forces via the addition of aesthetic value, a counterpractice has the potential to resist such forces.[80] As I learned about the community's resistance to the top-down renewal and state appropriation of the canal's place identity, I questioned how these patterns might also be entangled in public art practices in the Pointe, especially in the case of public commissions funded by the City of Montreal.

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[73] Author's translation: This is challenging to directly translate but most closely means a notion of "belonging to us" or a "feeling of home"
[74] Bélanger, "Pour qui et à qui ce parc ?," 152. Bélanger is careful to note that her mixed methodology is imperfect, but I think it is also important to note that it included interviews with new and traditional neighbourhood residents.
[75] Bélanger, 143; High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.*, 241.
[76] High et al., *Canal: Walking the Post-Industrial Lachine Canal.* 00:36
[77] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.*, 211.
[78] Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, 57.
[79] Deutsche, 60.
[80] Deutsche, 60, 65.

The Places of Public Art

In *Mapping the Terrain*, Lippard suggests that artists can "bring out multiple readings of places that mean different things to different people and at different times."[81] In keeping with Lippard's complex notion of public art in relation to place, what can a study of public art practices, and their meanings for local residents, offer for the understanding of place in the Pointe?[82] How were citizens consulted or involved in the artworks in question? And what might the inherent power dynamics in these processes tell me about public art and place-making?[83] Documentation of artist proposals and jury decisions regarding *Monument à la Pointe* and *Le Village imaginé* in the BAP's collection, community bulletins and other documents found in the Archives populaires, as well as articles from *La Voix populaire* revealed different degrees of detail surrounding the commissioning, creation and reception of these three public artworks and their respective sites. In this chapter, I expand on these sources in chronological order, accompanied by visual analysis of each work.

Rosalind Krauss's foundational 1979 essay, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," provides valuable theoretical insights, that inform the art-historical analysis in this chapter, and my understanding of the interplay between sculptural public art and site. Krauss first maps a pre-modernist sculptural logic that identifies how boundaries between site and sculpture were established.[84] By the logic of a monument, sculpture would have told us something about its location, with the base acting as a mediator between the "actual site" and what the sculpture

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[81] Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 129.
[82] Lacy, 121–23.
[83] Pollock and Paddison, "On Place-Making, Participation and Public Art," 101.
[84] Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 34, https://doi.org/10.2307/778224.

represented.[85] Modernist sculpture departed from this formula, absorbing the base and therefore becoming placeless and self-referential.[86] By the late 60s, site had once again become important, with artwork that blurred the boundaries between terms such as sculpture, landscape and architecture, neither conforming nor fully aligning with any one of these, and necessitating an expanded logic to be understood critically.[87] Krauss locates this rupture of categorical constraints in the postmodern era, ultimately concluding that this expanded logic moves beyond earlier, rigid binaries that bound sculpture, allowing for more fluid and dynamic possibilities.[88] This expanded logic also leads to new ways to consider the surroundings and site-specificity of an artwork, rather than the placelessness that characterized modernist sculpture.[89] In this way, Krauss' expanded logic offers a framework from which to consider the complex territorial possibilities surrounding each of my case studies in this chapter

Sublime **and Habitations Favard**

Sublime is the earliest publicly-commissioned sculpture in Pointe-Saint-Charles (fig. 3). It was created in 1978 by Québecois artist Maurice Lemieux (1931-94).[90] This fluid steel form resembles a broken ring that tapers into two points, with one end bent upwards at an angle and the other remaining parallel to the ground. [91] Standing at 7.62 meters high, the steel form rests on three short trapezoidal pedestals made of concrete, allowing it to be suspended above a circular

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[85] Krauss, 33.
[86] Krauss, 34.
[87] Krauss, 37,38.
[88] Krauss, 41.
[89] Krauss, 41, 42.
[90] Maurice Lemieux has multiple works included in the BAP collection, including another piece located by another housing complex in the Plateau neighbourhood in Montreal. He also created work for the De la Savane metro station, also in Montreal.
[91] "Sublime," Bureau d'art public – Ville de Montréal, accessed February 14, 2023, https://artpublic.ville.montreal.qc.ca/en/.

bed of rocks that is permanently set into the ground. Interestingly, the BAP's online documentation of the work shows the steel form painted blue in contrast to its present weathered brown colour, although no insight as to this colour change exists in their archives, and there is no on-site didactic panel (see figs. 3 and 4).[92] Though minimal detail is available from the BAP regarding this piece, I found enlightening territorial and temporal details of its site through other sources.

This sculpture is situated in the front garden of Habitations Favard, a low-income housing complex—which are known in Québec as habitations à loyer modéré (HLM) — located at the corner of Ash and Favard streets in the southern half of the neighbourhood (see fig. 2); this complex was inaugurated alongside *Sublime* in 1979.[93] A short fence with an opening leading to the building's doorway surrounds the yard, where *Sublime* is positioned to the right. The rock garden framing *Sublime* suggests an intentional and permanent place within the landscaping of the new building, while the pedestals ensure that the steel form hovers above the ground. These elements emphasize the presence of this artwork but also denote clear boundaries, isolating it from its environment. Though minimal information is available to further understand *Sublime*'s intended relationship with this space, an expanded sculptural logic begs the question of how the

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[92] Established in 1989, the BAP oversees the municipal collection of public art, fulfilling a mission outlined in the Action Plan for Public Art (1989). They kindly shared the only information they have on this piece with me in their archives. These are photos of the piece in various states of completion. The photos were transmitted to the BAP in 2014 by the person responsible for the estate of the artist, who is now deceased. They were thus unable to contact the estate holder and request permission for me to use these photos in this thesis.

[93] On the island of Montreal, directions are skewed due to the ways in which streets are oriented in relation to the St. Lawrence River, which is considered south when one is on the island. When I indicate directions in this thesis, I am using the orientation commonly used on the island. For a more detailed explanation see Alan Chodos, "Welcome to Montréal, Where Down Is Up and the Sun Sets in the North," APS Advancing Physics, March 2004, http://www.aps.org/publications/apsnews/200403/upside-down.cfm.

broader context surrounding Habitations Favard could further contextualize this piece and its reception.[94]

Comprised of 109 apartments across eight floors, Habitations Favard is significantly larger than other residential buildings in this part of the Pointe.[95] This low-rental housing project was intended for seniors facing expropriation and poor housing conditions.[96] *La Voix populaire* reported on the new building's inauguration, publishing an article accompanied by a photo showing *Sublime* and crediting funding from city, provincial and federal sources. It concluded that the project was, "bref, une autre belle réalisation, tout à la gloire de nos gouvernants et pour le bien-être de nos concitoyens"[97] (fig. 5). This largely positive take is complicated by a newsletter that I found in the Archives populaires. Created by the Pointe Action Citizens' Council (PACC), this undated document mentions upcoming plans for the Habitations Favard project. Titled "Subject: Urban Renewal," it outlines Montreal's low-rental housing projects in line with a municipal urban renewal policy, including a map of these projects in Pointe-Saint-Charles (fig. 6).[98] The PACC takes a position on this policy in list form; they are against "Large City of Montreal Housing Projects like the planned Habitations Favard. It's like living in a zoo!"[99] They are however in favour of "City projects which we have helped to plan," in contrast

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[94] Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 41, 42.
[95] Residential buildings on Favard and neighbouring streets were developed mainly in the late-nineteenth century to house a growing population of industrial workers. They are usually triplexes and duplexes, and so are not usually more than a few storeys high. For more detailed information, see: Jean-Claude Marsan, "From Extravagance to Indigence: Domestic Architecture," in *Montreal in Evolution: Historical Analysis of the Development of Montreal's Architecture and Urban Environment* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981), 267, 268.
[96] Yvon Laprade, "Mise en chantier du projet Favard pour personnes âgées," *La Voix populaire*, May 2, 1978, 6, Saint Henri Historical Society.
[97] "Inauguration des Habitations Favard," *La Voix populaire*, May 22, 1979, Saint Henri Historical Society. Author's translation: "In short, another great achievement, all to the glory of our government and for the well-being of our citizens"
[98] "City of Montreal Low-Rental Housing Projects- Our Pointe 3" (Pointe Action's Citizen's Council, n.d.), MUA 2008-0025.01.07.365, McGill University Archives, Archives populaires de Pointe Saint-Charles, Fonds Clinique communautaire de Pointe Saint-Charles.
[99] "City of Montreal Low-Rental Housing Projects- Our Pointe 3."

to those, presumably like Favard, where citizens have not had a say.[100] These sources paint an ambivalent picture of *Sublime* s site. Residents clearly did not perceive this low-rental housing project in the name of the city's urban renewal goals as neutral, beneficial, or "glorious," but wished to have their voices included in the development of their neighbourhood.[101]

Though the creation, commissioning, and initial reception of *Sublime* are not well documented, the PACC's newsletter hints at how citizens felt about the site of this public art piece. Against the backdrop of what was by then a burgeoning grassroots cooperative and social housing movement, which had begun in the late 60s and early 70s in the Pointe, the resistance to Habitations Favard can be understood as part of a fight for housing solutions that protected low-income citizens from displacement and preserved the unique social fabric and mutual aid systems cultivated in this working-class community.[102]

Monument à la Pointe **and Habitations Sherwin Williams**

This grassroots housing movement in the Pointe serves to introduce the site of another publicly-commissioned piece located in the neighbourhood: *Monument à la Pointe* (2001) by Montreal artist Gilles Mihalcean. [103] The city commissioned the piece as part of an expansive repurposing of the former Sherwin Williams paint factory, which included community-initiated

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[100] "City of Montreal Low-Rental Housing Projects- Our Pointe 3."
[101] On the City of Montreal's attitude towards housing in Pointe-Saint-Charles, see this interview with architect Joseph Baker: Joseph Baker, The Gentrification Project- Montréal's design workshop, interview by Adam Bemma, July 16, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wM295bWVFAU&ab_channel=Dezeen.
[102] For an in-depth history of this community led cooperative and social housing movement, see Vickers, "From Balconville to Condoville, but Where Is Co-Opville? Neighbourhood Activism in 1980s Pointe-Saint-Charles," 173.
[103] Gilles Mihalcean is a renowned sculptor whose work has been widely exhibited. He also participated in an ephemeral exhibition surrounding the Lachine Canal in 2001 that aimed to respond to this changing urban landscape, called *Artefact* 2001. Jean-Pierre Aubé and Gilles Daigneault, *Artefact 22001:Urban Sculptures, Artis Facta in Latin Means the Effects of Art, Canal de Lachine, Summer 2001* (Montréal, Québec : Centre de diffusion 3D, 2001), https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/search/details/library/publication/56068744.

social housing.[104] Located just south of the canal across from the Atwater market, the factory ceased operations in 1984, at which point the 75 remaining employees lost their jobs (see fig. 2).[105] As there was no established provincial standard regarding who would absorb the costs of de-contaminating industrial buildings, the rezoning of the factory as residential represented a significant touchstone in Montreal's history of recycling industrial infrastructure. This case initiated new regulations that shifted the costs of decontamination to developers. In the case of Sherwin Williams, development was already underway when the Pointe-Saint-Charles Community Clinic lobbied for the soil to be tested. The site was found to be severely contaminated.[106] With developers now footing the bill for soil decontamination, housing activists realized that these provincial regulations would create a huge financial barrier for future social housing projects on industrial sites.[107] A two-year political fight ensued, during which time the province was pressured by activists to absorb the cost of soil decontamination, which was agreed to in 1989.[108]

By the mid-90s, the non-profit community organization "Les Habitations Sherwin" had developed a proposal to repurpose a section of the Sherwin Williams site for social housing; this was eventually completed by the spring of 1998.[109] The redevelopment of the site also resulted in the conversion of an adjacent building into lofts by a private developer, the creation of a park,

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[104] "Monument à la Pointe," Bureau d'art Public – Ville de Montréal, accessed January 19, 2023, https://artpublic.ville.montreal.qc.ca/en/oeuvre/monument-a-la-pointe/.
[105] Conrad Bernier, "Sherwin-Williams ferme son usine de Montréal," *La Presse*, February 15, 1984, Collections de BAnQ, https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/2286037?docpos=15.
[106] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.*, 260; J.P Trudel, "Du BPC à La Sherwin Williams: Fausse Rumeur," *La Voix populaire*, September 3, 1985, Saint Henri Historical Society.
[107] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.*, 262.
[108] High, 263, 264.
[109] Les Habitations Sherwin, "Proposition de développement," September 1996, MUA 2008 0024 01 05 436, McGill University Archives, Archives populaires de Pointe Saint-Charles, Fonds Regroupement Information Logement.

and a redesign of the surrounding traffic infrastructure where a roundabout would feature a publicly-commissioned artwork (fig. 7).[110] While press releases from the city in 1997 state that the empty factory had become a nuisance for locals, and that community demands for more social housing and municipal development goals to repurpose industrial infrastructure eventually aligned, the reality was far less harmonious.[111]

A 1996 bulletin update by a community group called the "Comité des residents du secteur Sherwin Williams" complicates this perceived consensus. Their opening remarks are telling: "La mise en oeuvre de ce projet n'est pas une grace de la ville à notre endroit mais plutôt un baume sur une plaie ouverte et entretenue de-mème depuis plusieurs années."[112] These accusations towards the city are followed by further criticism of public administration for delaying the project at the cost of citizen tax dollars. The allocation of funding to decontaminate the Lachine Canal linear park, but not the park included in the Sherwin Williams development, is also questioned.[113] Further, the committee expresses concern with respect to the planned public artwork:

> Cette statue appartient à notre quartier. Les argents sont votes. La décision est prise et la seule raison pour laquelle on nous l'enlèverait serait pour des motifs politiques, par exemple, parce que le parc ne serait pas décontaminé.

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[110] Ville de Montreal, "Montréal construira un parc et réaménagera une section de la rue Atwater dans le Sud-Ouest" (Cabinet de comité exécutif, March 13, 1996), MUA 2008 0024 01 05 420, McGill University Archives, Archives populaires de Pointe Saint-Charles, Fonds Regroupement Information Logement.
[111] Ville de Montreal; Ville de Montreal, "Montréal et Québec contribuent au financement de 75 nouveaux logements sociaux dans le sud-ouest" (Cabinet de comité exécutif, August 29, 1997), MUA 2008 0024 01 05 420, McGill University Archives, Archives populaires de Pointe Saint-Charles, Fonds Regroupement Information Logement.
[112] "Comité des residents du secteur Sherwin Williams: Bulletin d'information," March 22, 1996, 1, MUA 2008 0024 01 05 428, McGill University Archives, Archives populaires de Pointe Saint-Charles, Fonds Regroupement Information Logement. Author's translation: "The implementation of this project is not a grace from the city to us but rather a balm to a wound opened and maintained by the city itself for many years."
[113] Comité des residents du secteur Sherwin Williams: Bulletin d'information," 1.

> Il ne faut pas laisser passer ça. Qui plus est, il faudrait exiger que le comité de sélection a être mise sur pied pour la statue soit composé essentiellement (non pas d'un seul) de citoyens de l'arrondissement.[114]

These comments allude to the committee's mistrust of public administration. Further, their demand that citizens be the majority in the selection committee is a significant detail. It implies that the committee foresaw an invitation from the city for citizen participation in the selection process and thought that decisive power should belong to citizens, a sentiment that art historians committed to socially-engaged public art practices would share.[115]

City of Montreal documents related to the selection process confirm the committee's concern: ultimately, only one community representative sat on the selection jury that chose Gilles Mihalcean's proposal for *Monument à la Pointe* in October 2000.[116] Citing pressure from citizens to follow through with its promise of a public art piece, the city reported their intention to give the neighbourhood a "caractère attrayant, afin d'y attirer une nouvelle population de résidants."[117] *Monument à la Pointe* cost $260,000 and was inaugurated in 2001 at the roundabout of Centre Street and Atwater Avenue. From the roundabout, three tree-trunk-like legs, made of concrete and painted a mossy green, sprout upwards, supporting a triangular prism at its end. The prism is horizontally split into three segments, each made of a different material. The mossy green colour of the legs continues into the lowest segment, which is also made of

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[114] Comité des residents du secteur Sherwin Williams: Bulletin d'information," 2. Author's translation: "This statue belongs to our neighbourhood. The money is yours. The decision is made and the only reason it would be taken away from us would be for political reasons, for example, because the park would not be decontaminated. That should not be allowed to happen. Moreover, it should be required that the selection committee to be set up for the statue be composed essentially (not just one) of citizens of the borough."

[115] Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 19,121.

[116] Ville de Montréal, "Sommaire décisionnel projet de convention, Monument à la Pointe, de l'artiste Gilles Mihalcean" (Service de la culture, Direction développement culturel, Division Équipements culturels et Bureau d'art public, November 14, 2000), dossier 2./2.1, BAP Centre de documentation.

[117] Ville de Montréal. Author's translation: "attractive character, with the goal of attracting a new population of residents"

concrete and features a brick-like texture. The middle segment is made of red brick and is the largest of the three, while the final section is made of aluminum and topped by three smokestacks of varying heights. Standing at a height of 14 metres, the piece towers above the cars using the roundabout, emphasizing its monumental size.

According to Mihalcean, the piece references the neighbourhood's geography and history through form and materials (fig. 8). [118] Mihalcean's original proposal states that the tree-like green legs supporting the core triangular prism (a "point") refer to pre-industrial land use (fig.9). The extension of the green colour into the core prism refers to Irish contributions to the industrial development in the Pointe. [119] This red brick layer refers to the importance of industrial development and working-class housing. The highest aluminum layer and smokestacks represent the present, according to the artist: "celui de I'ouverture, de la lumière et de la gentrification."[120] It must be noted that there is no didactic panel on site to help the visitor understand the piece.

Monument à la Pointe does attempt to reference heritage, history, and the Pointe's distinct character, but the place-making patterns and power dynamics behind its selection reveal a complicated narrative. The context of the Sherwin Williams development project, the inclusion of only one citizen on the jury, and the city's intent to entice a new, more affluent population through the deployment of public art mean that this work is not a neutral figure in the postindustrial urban renewal of Pointe-Saint-Charles. It further begs the question whether a

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[118] "De l'art dans Pointe St-Charles," *La Voix populaire*, October 7, 2001, Saint Henri Historical Society.
[119] See Colin McMahon, "Port of Recall: Memory of the Great Irish Famine in Liverpool and Montreal" (Toronto, York University, 2010), https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/thesescanada/vol2/002/NR80549.PDF.
[120] Gilles Mihalcean, "Presentation 'La Pointe'" (Ville de Montréal, Service de la culture, Direction développement culturel, Division Équipements culturels et Bureau d'art public, October 12, 2000), 2, dossier 3/3.1, BAP Centre de documentation. Author's translation: "[…] the one of openness, light and gentrification." The discrepancies between the artist's proposal and the BAP's description of *Monument à la Pointe* are noteworthy; the BAP makes no mention of futurity and gentrification tied to this piece, referring only to the ways in which it gestures to the neighbourhood's past.

selection committee primarily made up of citizens living in the Pointe would have resulted in the same choice.

Le Village imaginé **and Marguerite Bourgeoys Park**

The third publicly-commissioned work I consider is another site-specific sculptural work that draws on the heritage of its site.[121] *Le Village imaginé. Le renard l emporte, le suite à la trace…"* by Pierre Bourgault is the complete title of a sculptural work installed in Marguerite Bourgeoys Park in 2005, a large tree-filled space located just south of the busy artery of Wellington Street (see fig. 2). Bourgault's piece is comprised of a central aluminum and chrome-plated element resembling a long, continuous ribbon-like form that loops into a monumental knot. It is large enough for people to climb through and is surrounded by four box-like architectural forms made of corten steel – that is weathered to a rusty patina (fig. 10). These forms are roughly the size of a small shed and the tallest of the four sits by the aluminum knot, resting on its bottom edge so it tilts outwards. The other three forms sit squarely on elevated mounds dispersed throughout the park, each featuring a distinctive abstract recess and a pitched roof (fig.11). Collectively, this piece covers an area of 98 by 115 metres, which gives a sense of the distance between each element. This fluid integration of architectural and sculptural elements into the park's landscape makes for a dynamic relationship with the site, yet is complicated by the piece's engagement with historical and contemporary context.

Le Village imaginé was commissioned to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the arrival of the park's namesake, nun Marguerite Bourgeoys (1620-1700), to "Nouvelle-France" and la

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[121] Site-specific art is in short, art created for a specific location. For further reading, see: Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (MIT Press, 2004).

Grande Recrue of 1653, a historical event that saw settlers recruited from France.[122] The City of Montreal reports that this commission came about through the request of the Southwest borough to enrich the tourism and cultural value of the sector through public art.[123] They also note this request as confirmation of a mutual desire to revitalize the area. Further, the park's proximity to the former 17th-century farm (founded by Bourgeoys herself) and popular tourist museum, Maison St. Gabriel, is noted as justification for the commissioning of a new public artwork. The director of Maison St. Gabriel was the only jury member acting as a community representative.[124]

The BAP's onsite didactic material gives minimal context for the artwork, explaining on their website that the aluminum knot evokes an Inuit string game (*ayarak* in Inuktitut) and is a metaphor for the "village," presumably referring to the Pointe, while the architectural forms are meant to reflect the cultural diversity of the neighbourhood. [125] The theme of habitat, embodied by the combination of all elements in this piece, is intended to "evoke the colony's difficult early days."[126] However, its celebration of settlers' arrival to this area without reference to the experience of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) people on whose traditional lands the park is located furthers an ahistorical narrative that risks perpetuating the erasure of Indigenous perspectives. The failure of the BAP and the city to recognize the complexities in representing this colonial narrative is exacerbated by minimal meaningful context for the artists' use of the

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[122] La Grande Recrue, or "The Great Recruitment"of 1653 was an effort to recruit settlers from France to join the colony in "New France." Marguerite Bourgeoys (1620-1700) was one of the settlers who arrived in this context. She notably founded Congrégation de Notre-Dame and the farm that is Maison St. Gabriel today: the arrival point of many women who came to the colony to marry settlers, referred to as the Filles du Roi (King's daughters). See "Education," Maison Saint-Gabriel, accessed July 1, 2023, https://maisonsaintgabriel.ca/en/education/.
[123] Ville de Montréal, "Sommaire décisionnel et résolution, Le village imaginé. «Le renard l'emporte, le suit à la Trace.…» de l'artiste Pierre Bourgault, 2005." (Service de la culture, Direction développement culturel, Division Équipements culturels et Bureau d'art public, August 18, 2004), 2 /2.1, BAP Centre de documentation.
[124] Ville de Montréal.
[125] "Le Village imaginé. 'Le renard l'emporte, le suit à la trace…,'" Bureau d'art Public – Ville de Montréal, accessed February 22, 2023, https://artpublic.ville.montreal.qc.ca/en//oeuvre/le-village-imagine-le-renard-lemporte-le-suit-a-la-trace/.
[126] "Le Village imaginé. 'Le renard l'emporte, le suit à la trace…'"

ayarak. By representing the cultural practice of string games, the piece risks further harm by appropriating the Inuit right to self-determination.[127] Ultimately, *Le Village imaginé*'s intended celebration falls short of deeply engaging with the history of its site.

Citizen reception to the piece, as outlined in the 2005 *Voix populaire* article mentioned earlier, was not positive. The criticism targeted the cost of the piece, nearly $200,000.[128] Two photos published side by side sum up the article's sentiment. In one, a citizen holds a sign that reads," THIS 'ART 'DOES NOT BELONG HERE !!" The other shows the borough mayor, the artist, and a city representative standing beside the artwork (fig. 12). No residents are otherwise pictured, reinforcing the sense that the art was not for the citizens of the Pointe. Marguerite Bourgeoys Park was also re-landscaped with the installation of *Le Village imaginé*, prompting the citizens quoted in this article to mourn its previous state and question the safety of this new structure.[129] Suggestions of what the funds could have been used for instead include a wading pool, a play area for children, and a proposed sidewalk, which had apparently been postponed for years due to lack of funding.[130] These reactions indicate a fissure between the city and borough's intent to revitalize the park with the addition of *Le Village imaginé,* and what citizens would have wished to see in this beloved and well-used park.

Photographs from the mid-20th century show that in addition to many trees (some of which seem to have survived to this day), the park was at one point home to a theatre with a stage. In *The Point is… Grassroots Organizing Works,* resident Denise Boucher recalls that the

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[127] On Indigenous self-determination, Inuit art sovereignty and tangible/intangible intellectual property, see Emily Henderson, Theresie Tunglik, and Dalee Dorough Sambo, Educating and Advocating for Inuit Art Sovereignty, Panel recording, April 4, 2022, Inuit Art Foundation, Smithsonian Institution Arctic Studies Center, https://arcticartssummit.ca/articles/educating-and-advocating-for-inuit-art-sovereignty/.
[128] Ville de Montréal, "Sommaire Décisionnel et Résolution,Le Village Imaginé. «Le Renard l'emporte, Le Suit à La Trace.…» de l'artiste Pierre Bourgault, 2005."
[129] Mathieu R. Perron, "Une nouvelle oeuvre d'art ne fait pas l'unanimité," *La Voix populaire*, June 19, 2005.
[130] Perron.

park hosted gatherings and dancing (figs. 13 and 14).[131] An archival file of mostly unattributed press clippings related to the park offers a few more glimpses into this history: the theatre was likely torn down in 1975, but new amenities such as benches and lighting were added the same year; in 1962 the park was threatened by a new highway, and a citizen published a passionate letter in the name of preserving the trees and this "oasis" of green space in an underserved neighbourhood; in 1973 neighbourhood youth collected rubbish and cleaned up the well-used park.[132]

These sentiments published in popular media point to the ways in which Marguerite Bourgeoys Park has been meaningful for citizens. The city's disregard for their input in the selection of *Le Village imaginé* parallels problems that have arisen in some instances of site-specific public art. In *Mapping the Terrain,* Lacy quotes Jeff Kelley to identify a phenomenon in which some artists "parachute[d] into a place and displace[d] it with art," imposing "a kind of disembodied museum zone onto what already had been very meaningful and present before that, which was the place."[133] Though the nearby Maison St. Gabriel certainly holds important historical significance in Point-Saint-Charles, the re-interpretation of history through the commissioning of *Le Village imaginé* reveals the intent to make this space more appealing. The question remains, for who?[134]

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[131] Kruzynski et al., *The Point Is… Grassroots Organizing Works: Women from Point St. Charles Sharing Stories of Solidarity*, 34.
[132] "D1901-135 : Parcs et terrains de jeux : Parc Marguerite-Bourgeoys. - [18-]-[19-]," 1918, CA M001 VM166-1-1-D4201, Ville de Montréal. Section des archives, https://archivesdemontreal.ica-atom.org/uploads/r/ville-de-montreal-section-des-archives/a/7/6/a76534bced3df362e18e663671e83b71e24b9bcf73d3a0280792243bd75036c0/VM166-D01901-135_op.pdf.
[133] Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 24. Lacy credits this quote to Jeff Kelley, but no source information is provided. In the chapter notes, Lacy indicates that unattributed quotations are drawn from a 1991 symposium called "Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art."
[134] Bovaird, "Public Art in Urban Regeneration An Economic Assessment," 10.

In this chapter, I have extended this question to the re-imagining and renewal plans of three sites in the Pointe by interpreting archival evidence from different: artists, city officials and residents. In postindustrial neighbourhoods undergoing renewal, new narratives of place are often crafted by incorporating heritage, history, and the active participation of local communities.[135] As this chapter demonstrates, the power dynamics behind these place-making patterns can result in uneven social outcomes.[136] The city's minimal citizen involvement in public art projects reveals the ways in which publicly-commissioned art has been a tool for place-making and urban renewal in Pointe-Saint-Charles. Place-making has been an economic rather than a socially motivated practice in urban regeneration, employed to attract investment by "enhancing and exploiting the unique characteristics of place."[137] While the intentions of artists and commissioners may not be purely economic, Speight has found that reductive interpretations that focus on a singular place identity can inform place-making in public art to support an economic agenda above all.[138] In contrast, Speight suggests place-listening as an approach to public art practices, which can uncover narratives of place that might be overlooked by place-making. The objective of the following chapter is to learn from precisely such narratives.

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[135] Pollock and Paddison, "On Place-Making, Participation and Public Art," 101.
[136] Pollock and Paddison, 87; Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 30.
[137] Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 28.
[138] Speight, 28.

Chapter Two: Place-listening in Pointe-Saint-Charles

In the first section of this chapter, I introduce a fourth public artwork to this case study: the community mural *La Pointe All-Dress* (2013). The conditions of its creation are in contrast to the three publicly-commissioned works discussed in Chapter One. The mural, which depicts a history of the neighbourhood, was initiated through a political protest and created by a group of neighbourhood residents, the Collectif au pied du mur, with the participation of many volunteers. These artists, as well as scholars, popular media, and community groups, all produced different kinds of documentation of *La Pointe All-Dress* over the years, which I use to understand the mural's temporal and territorial dimensions. Further, the mural's community-centred mandate upholds ideals that many scholars, including Lucy Lippard and Nato Thompson, suggest are important to socially-engaged art practices, primarily that it is participatory and challenges power.[139] Speight finds that in contexts of urban change, sometimes even socially-engaged practices can overlook local forms of agency by not accounting for diverse experiences of place. It is within this paradox that she proposes place-listening: a method she uses to engage with residents to "create a space in which various experiences and senses of place could be articulated and explored."[140]

In the second section of this chapter, I explore selected excerpts from five semi-structured interviews with six long-term residents of Pointe-Saint-Charles, conducted between October 27th, 2022 and January 30th, 2023. I asked my interviewees questions relating to the mural, the three public commissions discussed in Chapter One, as well as addressing their experiences with place and urban change. Oral history interviews can open up a narrative space for the subjectivity of

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[139] Nato Thompson, ed., *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* (MIT Press, 2012), 19; Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 129.
[140] Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 30.

interviewees to be expressed; as an embodied and durational approach, place-listening methods such as walking interviews can create social and relational spaces where experiences of place and public art can be shared.[141] Methodologically, place listening and practicing a shared authority led me to conduct three of these interviews while walking (when weather permitted) and to generally opt for semi-structured interviews.[142] This choice allowed my interviews to divert from a prescribed path, both geographically and in conversation. Some of the most inspiring moments to me in this research emerged through this flexibility,[143] and the situated knowledge[144] of my interviewees informed the conclusion of this thesis.

La Pointe All-Dress **and the Canadian National Viaduct**

The final case study I consider in this thesis is a community mural, *La Pointe All-Dress* (2013), located on Knox Street near its intersection with Hibernia Street (see fig. 2). At the time of its inauguration in 2013, it was the longest mural in Montreal created by an independent collective, measuring 80 metres by 5 metres.[145] The informative panel installed nearby notes that with the mural, the artists intended to "represent the past, present and future aspirations of a neighbourhood known for its pride and struggles for social justice."[146] The mural is colourful, highly detailed, and plays with scale. The variety in mark-making and style reflects a shared

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[141] Alessandro Portelli, "Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience," *The Oral History Review* 45, no. 2 (August 1, 2018): 239, https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohy030; Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 29.
[142] Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*.
[143] Portelli, "Living Voices," 244.
[144] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 582, 583.
[145] Le Collectif au pied du mur, "Press Release," Tumblr, *Le Collectif au pied du mur* (blog), September 16, 2013, https://lecollectifaupieddumur.tumblr.com/.
[146] Funding for the project came from Engrenage Noir's "Activist Art" program, the City of Montreal, the Southwest Borough and private donors. Quartier 21, "La Pointe All-Dress - Commemorative Panel," n.d, https://www.actiongardien.org/quartier-21. The mural is a collaborative project between two community organizations, the Pointe Libertaire and the Carrefour d'education populaire.

effort between many contributors to the mural, but an overall whimsical and illustrative quality is consistent throughout.

At the west end of the mural, which could be read as the work's starting point, the imagery consists of five large Canada geese pointing their beaks toward three Indigenous people atop an enormous turtle's shell. These figures look out over a bright blue waterway. One figure wears clothing that features a graphic representation of the Hiawatha wampum belt. Symbols on the wampum belt represent each one of the original five Haudenosaunee nations united under the Great Law of Peace, including the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), the custodians of the unceded lands on which Pointe-Saint-Charles is located (fig. 15).[147] The waterway is lined with grey industrial buildings and billowing smokestacks, likely representing the nearby canal. As one moves east, bright and colourful elements are clustered together, including multiple depictions of people participating in neighbourhood activities and solidarity actions. Following the waterway, a parade of people is depicted holding various wind instruments and flags, most prominently a large banner that reads "JUSTICE" (see fig. 15).

This group of people, who are visibly diverse in age, race and gender, seemingly lead the viewer into the mural's next act: a cartoonish and colourful illustration of a typical Pointe-Saint-Charles block (one building has a "co-op" sign) where two figures in the foreground dance in the street. Their outfits are adorned with a subtle fleur-de-lys and a shamrock respectively, a nod to French and Irish histories in the Pointe (fig. 16). Next, two women's profiles vertically divide the

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[147]*Kaianerehkó:wa*, often translated to the "Great Law of Peace," is a constitution comprised of 117 articles and wampums that define processes for consensual decision making between nations in the longhouse. The unity of the Five Nations is based on this philosophy. To learn more about the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) confederacy (also known as the Five Nations confederacy), the Hiawatha wampum belt and the Great Law of Peace, see: Louis Karoniaktajeh Hall, *The Mohawk Warrior Society: A Handbook on Sovereignty and Survival*, ed. Phillippe Blouin et al. (PM Press, 2023), 77–106.

middle section of the mural, each spanning the height of the wall: to the left, an elder white woman with grey hair faces west, casting a red zeppelin from her hand. Signage that reads "La Pointe" sits on the zeppelin's roof, stylized to reference Montreal's iconic Farine Five Roses sign, which is visible from the mural's location on a clear day. The folds of the woman's hair are illustrated to resemble a birds-eye view of a grey cityscape. To the right, a Black woman wearing a colourful headscarf faces east, holding a sprouting plant that leads into a landscape of community garden plots (fig. 17). A group of people cluster around a vegetable stand nearby the garden, while others lean out of windows. Between the two profiles, vibrant, ribbon-like paths (one is painted like a rainbow) emerge from a group of youths standing with arms around each other. The paths encircle a white-haired figure embracing a globe marked with a tag reading "Nous sommes ici."[148]

The mural's final section features three distinct elements. To the left, two people sit on a bench, their upper bodies obscured by an enormous newspaper featuring neighbourhood headlines announcing the unveiling of the mural itself and pointing readers in the direction of community space, Bâtiment 7 (see fig. 17). Importantly, Bâtiment 7 is the result of a major grassroots movement in the neighbourhood that saw the triumphant reclamation of a former Canadian National (CN) warehouse for community use in 2012.[149] Another headline reads "MÈRE NATURE GAGNE. LE CAPITALISME S'EFONDRE. C'EST L'ANARCHIE,"[150] though it is unclear whether this headline refers to a specific event. Next to the bench, a tunnel with a stone archway frames an idyllic landscape and path (fig. 18). If tangible, this path would connect the bike path running parallel to the mural to the opposite side of the wall. Finally, a

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[148] Author's translation: "We are here"
[149] La Pointe Libertaire, *Bâtiment 7: victoire populaire à Pointe-Saint-Charles* (Éditions Ecosociété, 2013).
[150] Author's translation: "Mother nature wins. Capitalism breaks down. It's anarchy."

white coyote sits at the east end of the mural encircled by foliage, extending the full height of the wall.

The wall upon which the mural was painted is part of a raised railway viaduct, which runs through the neighbourhood. This 19th-century railway line, built by the Grand Trunk Railway Company and then owned by CN, historically split the neighbourhood in two, not just morphologically but also linguistically. French speakers tended to live north of the tracks, and English speakers lived south of the tracks. Though this division has become far less distinct over time, it had "social and imaginative importance"[151] for many people who grew up in the Pointe.[152] In 2006 during an action organized by the People's Urban Planning Project (OPA), members of the Pointe libertaire group painted a tunnel pathway on the wall to symbolically bridge the physical divide created by the aqueduct.[153] This was intended as a direct action in the name of nearby residents' wishes for a mural in the space, which had long been considered an eyesore.[154] This initial painting was not immediately removed, emboldening the group to continue painting. They were arrested for defacing property but negotiated an agreement in the courtroom for the creation of a permanent mural on this particular stretch of the CN wall. The tunnel on the permanent mural is an ode to this initial action (see fig. 18).[155]

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[151] Piyusha Chatterjee and Steven High, "The Deindustrialisation of Our Senses: Residual and Dominant Soundscapes in Montreal's Point Saint-Charles District," in *Telling Environmental Histories*, ed. Katie Holmes and Heather Goodall (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2017), 197, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-63772-3.
[152] The following two sources speak to the significance of the train in Point-Saint-Charles, both historically and in the present. Both rely on oral history interviews with residents of Pointe-Saint-Charles and have significantly shaped my understanding of the neighbourhood's social and spatial history: Chatterjee and High, "The Deindustrialisation of Our Senses: Residual and Dominant Soundscapes in Montreal's Point Saint-Charles District"; High et al., *La Pointe: L'autre bord de la track.* Audiowalk. (Montreal: Center for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, 2015). https://storytelling.concordia.ca/projects-item/la-pointe-the-other-side-of-the-tracks/
[153] Mira Baba, "The Point(e) of the Interstices: Tensions between Community and Capitalist Appropriation over Interstitial Spaces" (masters, Concordia University, 2019), 50, https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/id/eprint/985829/.
[154] Nos Voix, "PPP (Poétiser l'esPace Public)," November 10, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tsk55iFiJc0&ab_channel=nosvoix. 0:33-1:32
[155] Quartier 21, "La Pointe All-Dress - Commemorative Panel."

A dozen amateur artists from the neighbourhood formed the Collectif au pied du mur in order to plan the mural, presenting drafts to the public and inviting others to contribute.[156] With participation from community organizations and more than 200 people across a wide range of ages, the painting process took more than three months during the summer of 2013. A video posted on YouTube by Poétiser l'esPace Public (PPP) documents the process beginning with the initial tunnel up until the mural's completion in 2013. During what appears to be the vernissage, an organizer can be heard speaking about the mural as a reclamation of the space in the name of citizens' right to the city and the spaces they frequent each day.[157] The organizer describes reactions to the mural as certain details and elements resonate with different individuals, thus inspiring the title of "La Pointe- All-Dress!"[158] This playful title alludes to a bilingual Québecois expression for a pizza slice, colloquially known as "une pointe de pizza" in French, featuring all-dressed toppings. The title serves a dual purpose, nodding to the neighbourhood's nickname of "the Pointe" while also referencing the collaboration between the many contributors to the mural.

The Collectif have also been vocal in their intolerance for vandalism during their continued custodianship of the mural. The most notable example I am aware of is their response to a racist attack on a Black woman's profile included in the mural, which was targeted with white spray paint three months after the mural was complete. The defacement and resulting outrage received wide press coverage.[159] Volunteers quickly restored the portrait, documenting

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[156] Collectif au pied du mur, "Vernissage de la plus longue murale d'un collectif autonome à Montréal," Tumblr, *Collectif au pied du mur* (blog), September 16, 2013, https://lecollectifaupieddumur.tumblr.com/post/61412146485/vernissage-de-la-plus-longue-murale-dun-collectif.
[157] Nos Voix, "PPP (Poétiser l'esPace Public)." 2:44
[158] Nos Voix. 3:54
[159] *Artist Shaen Johnston Responds to Racist Vandalism* (Montreal, QC: CJAD 800 Montreal, 2013), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MEJKydlIng&ab_channel=CJAD800Montreal; Marchy, "Belle Mob Du Collectif au pied du mur," La Pointe Libertaire, December 7, 2013, https://www.lapointelibertaire.org/?p=578; Amanda Kelly, "Community Outraged after Pointe-Saint-Charles Mural Vandalized," Global News, December 3, 2013, https://globalnews.ca/news/1005980/community-outraged-after-pointe-saint-charles-mural-vandalized/.

this overnight process on the Collectif's tumblr page. More recently, I have seen posts on social media whenever the wall has been the subject of tagging or graffiti. The posts call for volunteers, and each time the artwork is restored within days.

This custodianship of the mural, its initial challenge to CN's control of the space, and the participatory and consultative practices of its creation are all pillars of socially-engaged public art practices, which Cameron Cartiere and Martin Zebracki describe as "place-aware art."[160] These conditions are in contrast to the municipal place-making patterns explored in Chapter One. In areas undergoing renewal, Elaine Speight has found that even within socially-engaged practices, art can be employed for economically driven place-making, and the "perceived presence of certain attributes in a place can instigate processes of gentrification that inflate land values, attracting wealthier groups while displacing less affluent ones."[161] Importantly, she is speaking to examples where artists might be employed by top-down forces, which is not the case of *La Pointe All-Dress*. Parallel sentiments do however arise in Mira Baba's 2019 study of "intersitial spaces"[162] in Pointe-Saint-Charles, which included this section of the CN wall. Baba's interview with one of the organizers highlighted a paradox inherent to this mural: the reclamation of the wall was intended as an anti-capitalist gesture, countering gentrification by placing control of the wall in the hands of citizens in a participatory way.[163] Baba notes that there is also, however, potential for the mural to add aesthetic value to the space, making the area that much

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[160] Cameron Cartiere and Martin Zebracki, *The Everyday Practice of Public Art: Art, Space, and Social Inclusion* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 9, https://www-taylorfrancis-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/pdfviewer/.
[161] Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 28.
[162] Baba examines how interstitial spaces, or in between spaces, created by an industrial spatial order have been appropriated for community-oriented use in Pointe-Saint-Charles, in opposition to use by capitalist, profit driven forces. Mira Baba, "The Point(e) of the Interstices: Tensions between Community and Capitalist Appropriation over Interstitial Spaces" (masters, Concordia University, 2019), 1, https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/id/eprint/985829/.
[163] Baba, 49–52.

more appealing to developers and gentrifiers.[164] For newcomers without the situated knowledge to engage with the mural's historical, activist and anti-capitalist narrative, it risks being read as an illustration rather than a testimony. This raises the question of what obligates new residents, who may or may not identify with the community depicted in the mural, to learn about these histories. These politics of engagement underscore the complexities inherent to socially-engaged public art practices in gentrifying urban landscapes like the Pointe.

Further, in *Deindustrializing Montreal*, Steven High is critical of the working-class history that is left out in favour of the mural's activist narrative, which does not account for issues of class within community action: "Leisure and solidarity, rather than work, define the mural. In other words, the image of the neighbourhood in the mural completely opposes the one offered by working-class residents in oral history interviews, who experienced the full impact of the hollowing out of the neighbourhood. There is no sign of hardship or hurt. Gentrification is likewise submerged in this ode to community."[165] High concludes that the mural's portrayal of Pointe-Saint-Charles as a model for what activism can achieve is well-intentioned, but does not protect those most affected by economic and urban change.[166] The interpretation, or re-interpretation, of history[167] represented by the mural may have ultimately produced a fixed reading of place that (as Speight has cautioned in a different context) neglected some residents' sense of place within the deindustrialization and gentrification of Pointe-Saint-Charles.[168]

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[164] Baba, 49–52.
[165] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.*, 283.
[166] High, 285.
[167] Bovaird, "Public Art in Urban Regeneration An Economic Assessment," 10.
[168] Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 30.

Situated Knowledge: Meeting Places

Following the complicated narratives of place and public art that I have explored so far in this thesis, I now return to Massey's notion of place, defined as a "meeting and weaving together" of social relations.[169] In 2003, Massey and Gillian Rose published a proposal for public art research in a re-developed city near London. They argue that if place indeed happens in the interaction between people, nature, and objects, the ways that people respond to those objects (in this case, public art) must be taken into account.[170] Massey and Rose are interested in thinking about how artworks have their own agency, as well as the diverse range of resources an artwork possesses such as colour, form, and composition, which audiences might experience and interpret in different ways. They argue that "the effects of a piece of public art are the result of the relations *between* the artwork and its audiences."[171] Public art is therefore an agent in a negotiation of place. Further, they conclude that for an artwork to be public, negotiation amongst different social identities must be invited to some degree.[172] Audience perspectives are then key to exploring the meanings of public art in a gentrifying neighbourhood with a rich industrial and activist history. Thus, finding a way to grasp these possibilities in the Pointe is essential.

I have explored above some of the relations at work in four public artworks through primary and secondary sources. But how have residents interpreted these works since their initial installation and reception? Following Bélanger and Deutsche, what has been the social impact of these pieces in their respective public spaces as the neighbourhood changed? The following

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[169] Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 155.
[170] Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose, "Artpoint – Milton Keynes Project" (The Open University, 2003), 18.
[171] Massey and Rose, 20.
[172] Massey and Rose, 21.

section advances a complex and nuanced understanding of public art and public space through selected excerpts from my interviews.

I considered different ways to present these findings. I acknowledge that I also impart my own subjectivity and sense of place in my curation of these excerpts. If I have learned something through place-listening, it is that an understanding of place as a process relies on subjectivity. Therein also lies the value of oral history, as a co-created dialogue, to illuminate an understanding of place that is not fixed, but ongoing and contingent.[173] I also want to note that while I have only included excerpts here, these interviews significantly influenced my approach to this research and are full of valuable and inspiring knowledge. Further, the nature of walking and the semi-structured interview format has meant that interviewees often spoke about public artworks in relation to each other, sometimes comparatively. My analysis has followed a chronological order up until this point; in this section, I instead locate these readings of public art and place at the points where these perspectives "meet and weave" together.[174]

To return first to the case study explored in this chapter, I learned a tremendous amount of contextual detail from my interviewees regarding *La Pointe All-Dress*. I interviewed a member of the Collectif au pied du mur, Patricia David, who I connected with through the callout I shared via Action Gardien. We met near the mural in November 2022 and she offered a close reading of many of the mural's details, including stained-glass elements she created that are embedded in the mural. I was amazed at how these fragile pieces of glass have withstood the elements for a decade. Before moving on in our walking path, I asked if there was anything we

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[173] Portelli, "Living Voices," 239; Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 28.
[174] Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 155.

hadn't discussed that she thought was important to know about the mural. She spoke about its reception:

> Les gens du quartier étaient ravis de cette expérience là et le résultat. Tu vois, tout le monde qui marche ici, tout était gris, laid, et puis ça a donné de la couleur. Non, je pense que la réponse des gens du quartier était vraiment très favorable. Puis les gens étaient contents.[175]

In January 2023, Colleen O'Donnell likewise shared her and her mother's positive reception of *La Pointe All-Dress*. Her family, who are of Irish heritage, have lived in Pointe-Saint-Charles for generations. She shared a particular detail of the mural that stood out to her:

> I think the one that sticks out to me is the fleur-de-lys pants and the shamrock skirt, because that's what I know. But I have to look at the rest because there's been a lot more. It has changed over the years, the Point. It's not just English and French anymore, you know? It's changed a lot.[176]

The shamrock and fleur-de-lys, Irish and French-Canadian symbols respectively, can be understood in Pointe-Saint-Charles to refer to the historic linguistic divide in the neighbourhood, also represented by the railway aqueduct. The figures adorned with these symbols are notably dancing, reflecting a harmonious rather than contentious relationship (see figs. 16 and 19). In her childhood, O'Donnell experienced clashes between neighbourhood children from both sides, but she also described a sense of camaraderie between these groups. Her above comment suggests that the mural's breadth of detail might reflect how the neighbourhood has since become more diverse (see fig. 19).[177]

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[175] Interview with Patricia David, interview by Olivia Vidmar, Pointe-Saint-Charles, Montreal, QC, November 25, 2022. 22:52 Author's translation: "The people in the neighbourhood were thrilled with the experience and the result. You see, everyone walking around here, everything was gray, ugly, and then it gave colour. No, I think the response from people in the neighbourhood was really very favourable And people were happy."
[176] Interview with Colleen O'Donnell, interview by Olivia Vidmar, Pointe-Saint-Charles, Montreal, QC, January 31, 2023. 1:33:20
[177] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.*, 52, 54.

Interestingly, in my walking interview with artist, professor, and long-term resident Kathleen Vaughan in December 2022, she observed that this element of the mural has itself changed; the fleur-de-lys and shamrock were once more apparent as patterns on the dancers' outfits:

> This has been changed as well, because it used to be more visibly French and Irish. There were more shamrocks. Now it's just a small one, but it used to be much more a part of their outfits, much more of a pattern.[178]

Patricia David confirmed that over the ten years since the mural was created, certain elements have indeed shifted under the continued care of the Collectif au pied du mur, such as the headlines on the newspaper at the east end of the wall.[179] The linguistic tensions that characterized industrial culture in the Pointe are no longer as present, and the neighbourhood demographic has since become far more culturally diverse.[180] The shift in prominence of the fleur-de-lys and shamrock may speak to the artists' desire to reflect these changes.

Interviewees also shared insights into changes in the use of the spaces surrounding the mural. It is worth noting that trains still run through the aqueduct regularly. During my walking interviews, we often paused at the site of *La Pointe All-Dress* while waiting for a train to pass.[181] Two of my interviewees, John Gutteridge and Rebecca Rupp, have lived near the aqueduct since the 1980s. When we met in October 2022, for what was my first interview in the context of this research, I asked them what it was like before the mural. Rupp recalled that there was no bike

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[178] Interview with Kathleen Vaughan, interview by Olivia Vidmar, Pointe-Saint-Charles, Montreal, QC, December 4, 2022. 44:56
[179] Interview with Patricia David.
[180] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.*, 44–56.
[181] For further reading on the shifting presence and especially sounds of the railway in the Pointe, see Chatterjee and High, "The Deindustrialisation of Our Senses."

path, and perhaps not even a sidewalk at one point. [182] Gutteridge likewise commented on the way the space has changed, as well as the significance of the aqueduct:

> Gutteridge: And this is another, different level of gentrification. This railroad runs through our community in two ways, from that way and this way. So, it's a divider, but it's part of the industry. [...] This, [the mural] this makes it look better. But it was just a total mess for years.

As we stood in front of the mural, we noticed someone sweeping the sidewalk. This prompted a discussion on the sense of pride in maintaining this stretch of Knox Street that has perhaps come with the addition of amenities like the bike path and the mural. As John Gutteridge observed, "now, it's a public space."[183] These memories speak to the way the mural's site has arguably shifted from one of industry first, to one that is for pedestrian (and cyclist) use: a public space. Kathleen Vaughan also spoke to the uses of this space when I asked her about the timing of the mural's creation:

> Well, I think at that time there was a lot of discussion about the beginning of gentrification, and so that was something that started to be on people's minds as the condos started to be built and anxiety about what it would mean about the spirit of the neighbourhood, the relative percentage of social housing, which had been very high here as you know. And that was going to shift as there was just generally more building that was not social housing. So, I think that this moment was really a time of speaking a kind of spirit of the neighbourhood, by the neighbourhood, back to the neighbourhood. Just as a reminder, perhaps to people who'd arrived more recently or to people who had been here for a long time, of the many components that have made this a place that people value together. So I think now it seems, it's not exactly like the gentrification has happened, but it kind of has, it's still underway.[184]

Vaughan's framing of the mural as a space of learning for newer residents as the neighbourhood becomes more gentrified, and Gutteridge's framing of this site as a public space, indicate the

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[182] Interview with John Gutteridge and Rebecca Rupp, interview by Olivia Vidmar, Pointe-Saint-Charles, Montreal, QC, October 27, 2022. 1:04:29
[183] Interview with John Gutteridge and Rebecca Rupp. 1:04:50
[184] Interview with Kathleen Vaughan. 40:30

possible ways in which the mural might invite negotiation amongst different social identities.[185] Insight from Vaughan, David, O'Donnell, Gutteridge and Rupp also highlights the way the mural has played a role in transforming the streetscape on Knox, physically and symbolically. The viaduct as a physical manifestation of the earlier, social divides has been softened and nuanced through the mural and the ongoing care for this artwork. These situated perspectives offer new and complex readings of *La Pointe All-Dress*, deepening an understanding of urban change in Pointe-Saint-Charles and the possible social functions of the mural in this landscape.

The Agency of Public Art: "You need art too"

The situated readings of *Sublime, Monument à la Pointe* and *Le Village imaginé* shared by my interviewees likewise illuminated temporal, geographical and social connections to these three artworks. Importantly, these perspectives both complicate and substantiate findings I explored through archival research in Chapter One. This makes a case for the methodological approach taken in this thesis to enrich an understanding of public art practices in the Pointe. The personal perspectives of long-term residents are foundational to public art histories in the Pointe for their potential to reveal multiple narratives of place in a gentrifying neighbourhood with a rich industrial and activist past, and the role of public art within those narratives.

Colleen O'Donnell's reading of *Monument à la Pointe* illuminated a meaningful connection between the materiality of this artwork and the cultural history of Pointe-Saint-Charles. When I asked her about this piece, the interpretation she was familiar with differed from the intended symbolism offered by the BAP and the artist's initial proposal (see fig. 8):[186]

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[185] Massey and Rose, "Artpoint – Milton Keynes Project," 21.
[186] "Monument à La Pointe."

> O'Donnell: Apparently if you notice the colours, they're green, white and orange. So that's for the Irish flag. The bricks have something to do with the bricklayers, and the steel. When I first saw it, I thought oh, is that supposed to be like the Irish flag or something.[…]. But it's for the Irish in the Point. There was something about steelworkers or bricklayers. It might have been bricklayers since it's all brick.
>
> Vidmar: Well there's a little bit of steel on the top so you might be right.
>
> O'Donnell: Now that makes a bit of sense to me, compared to the one in Marguerite Bourgeoys Park.

While the artist intended certain elements of *Monument à la Pointe* to refer to Irish history and working-class architecture in Pointe-Saint-Charles, O'Donnell interpreted the work as a celebration of Irish heritage and labour. Her situated knowledge of neighbourhood history and her Irish roots in the Pointe underscore the potential for this piece to reflect meaningful narratives of place despite the complicated conditions of its commissioning.

O'Donnell's reading also highlights what the territorial conditions of *Monument à la Pointe* can offer its audience: the lack of a didactic panel leaves the work up to interpretation, while its location in a busy roundabout means it is safest to view it from a distance (see fig. 7). When I asked Kathleen Vaughan about her first impression of this piece, she likewise considered its formal, symbolic and spatial qualities:

> Vaughan: There's a bit of a pessimism for me embodied here. We come from the natural, into wooden-base building, then brick-based building and now kind of steel and chimneys. And although that is a familiar arc, it's just not one that especially now, 20 some years after it was installed, it's not one that we want to continue. So the fact that we end, so to speak, the heights are with the more contemporary industrial model, I think is too bad. Had this been done now, there might have been a desire to shift it back to something that was more inclusive of the natural world as well.
>
> Vidmar: And maybe more cyclical rather than one direction.
>
> Vaughan: Yeah. So I think that would be my sort of dismay about this piece on a conceptual level of things. Visually, it's kind of cool and practical in that space,

> again, the roundabout, lines of sight, etc. And it is… almost like a haiku shorthand for some of the histories of this neighbourhood.[187]

As Vaughan observed, *Monument à la Pointe* might imply a fixed idea of progress, and its location in a roundabout is not very safely accessible to a pedestrian. This piece, however, could prompt a viewer to learn about certain neighbourhood histories from a distance without complicating the practical use of the roundabout.[188] Vaughan and O'Donnell's interpretations of this piece point to the ways in which the potentialities of public art can be revealed through the situated, site-specific knowledge of its audiences.[189]

Likewise, the situated knowledge and interpretations shared with me in interviews offered compelling readings of *Sublime* and led me to learn about its site. Colleen O'Donnell remembered a dye factory in this location on Favard Street, which had been torn down very quickly.[190] A fire insurance map from 1961 confirms this recollection. Figure 20 shows the Verdun Dying Co. Ltd located between Fortune and Ash Avenue, exactly where Habitations Favard would be built almost two decades later (fig. 20). Kathleen Vaughan's reading of *Sublime*'s site and temporal conditions was also illuminating. Though the piece had not previously made a significant impact on her sense of this place, as we moved past the fence and large trees to be able to walk around the piece, she shared her initial impressions:

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[187] Interview with Kathleen Vaughan. 01:09:54

[188] Irish heritage is actively commemorated in the Pointe. The "walk to the stone" is a tradition more than 150 years old which takes the form of an annual walk to the Black Rock. Located on Bridge Street in Pointe-Saint-Charles, this engraved boulder honours 6,000 Irish famine victims buried near the Victoria Bridge and the annual tradition serves to remember those who passed. This came up in my interviews with Colleen O'Donnell and Kathleen Vaughan and is an important tradition in the Pointe. To learn more, see the following two sources: "As Montreal's Irish Footprint Shrinks, Community Presses Ahead with Memorial," Montreal Gazette, May 28, 2022, https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/as-montreals-irish-footprint-shrinks-community-presses-ahead-with-memorial; McMahon, "Port of Recall: Memory of the Great Irish Famine in Liverpool and Montreal."

[189] Massey and Rose, "Artpoint – Milton Keynes Project," 20.

[190] Interview with Colleen O'Donnell.

> The tree probably was not quite touching it back in the day. It does seem like it's sort of claiming the green space, almost like a kind of a protection of the greenspace in a way…not that anything would happen in this little corner to change that, but just that, it's in a way sort of custodianship of the green space. I know often with the HLMs it's difficult to maintain gardens, the actual plants and flowers, just because of cost and labour, all those things. And so perhaps the *Sublime* is a gesture to a kind of a permanent garden.[191]

Vaughan's interpretation of *Sublime* as an index of care for this space was also echoed by John Gutteridge and Rebecca Rupp. As we walked by one of the first locations of the Pointe-Saint-Charles Community Clinic,[192] founded by activists in the 1970s in response to insufficient healthcare resources in the Pointe, Gutteridge and Rupp spoke about the significance of this achievement. *Sublime* came up in this context:

> Gutteridge: And that [the community clinic] was an incredible achievement because it says …
>
> Rupp: It really was.
>
> Gutteridge: We're not going to get sidelined because we're a poor community, French or English.
>
> Rupp: And we're not going to let others make the decisions for our community.
>
> Gutteridge: So they got on the board. They did all this, so much to say that they could do these things to protect themselves from the perils of being poor. But then this stuff comes along. When I think about gentrification—okay, the oldest piece that I really like around here you did have on your list. It's the one over by Favard. Sadly, they've let trees grow around it and you can't see it as well, but it's a real emblematic piece from the late seventies and it's right in front of a public building, and you're going, okay, this seems almost like a governmental message to the people around there: We're going to have a fresh start here with more city housing, and we're going to throw a nice big sculpture there, like a Calder out there. But then there's a dry period. Then this one came along, there was talk that they were going to put public art in a park [referring to Marguerite Bourgeoys Park].[193]

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[191] Interview with Kathleen Vaughan. 26:15
[192] Kruzynski et al., *The Point Is… Grassroots Organizing Works: Women from Point St. Charles Sharing Stories of Solidarity*, 89–118.
[193] Interview with John Gutteridge and Rebecca Rupp. 14:29

My interviewees' insights deepened my understanding of the deindustrializing conditions of the 1970s in the Pointe when the building of Habitations Favard would have been underway. As noted elsewhere in this thesis, grassroots organizing, rather than state or municipal planning, created essential solutions for much needed services like healthcare and housing in Pointe-Saint-Charles. Vaughan and Gutteridge, in different ways, interpreted the commissioning of *Sublime* as a sign of care for Habitations Favard and the larger community of the Pointe. Gutteridge's comments also contextualize the contentious relationship between the city and citizens (explored in Chapter One) regarding *Le Village imaginé*.

Further, in relation to *Le Village imaginé,* the personal perspectives of long-term residents contributed dimension and nuance to my understanding, through archival sources, of the tensions generated by this piece and the narratives of place in Marguerite Bourgeoys Park.[194] John Gutteridge and Rebecca Rupp often visited this park with their family; they appreciated and were interested in the sculpture as designed but agreed that the connection between the architectural forms and the central knot was unclear. They also contextualized the community reaction to the piece (some of which had been discussed in *La Voix populaire*):

> Rupp: And you know, people who have never seen probably a sculpture in their life. They see this …
>
> Gutteridge: Not impressed.
>
> Rupp: And all they can feel is more disenfranchised because somebody's got lots of money for that. And especially when there's still plenty of poverty down here—though nothing like it was before. So, when they see that, it's a disparity that they don't get. It makes, makes people very defensive I would say.

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[194] I am referring here to the citizen's protest in *La Voix populaire* which I discussed in chapter 1. Perron, "Une nouvelle oeuvre d'art ne fait pas l'unanimité."

> Gutteridge: But at the same time as we're talking about this thing [referring to *Le Village imaginé*] and you could say 'I don't understand, I'm not sure I appreciate it.' Fine. 'I wasn't involved in that consultation.' Usually, Montreal consultations are just after they've decided something and they let the public— 'Oh, by the way, what do you think?'—but we've already decided, you know, we're going to be nice to you. In Pointe-Saint-Charles, when they were going to build the casino over by Costco, I was at, Saint Columba[195] and the director there said, 'there's no way we're going to let this go if we don't have a fight.' So we went door to door. We did a walk through there, made some noise, and they didn't do it.[196] That was the type of thing that really resonates with Pointe-Saint-Charles people— sort of a protest. But when you see something like this walkway [referring to a walkway in the park embedded with commemorative name plaques] […] this has more about the history of Pointe-Saint-Charles and you're going to walk over it. Maybe you won't read it. But for somebody who lives here who says, 'they could have spent that on health care' or 'the school's falling down.' […] When people walk around, here they go 'that makes sense [referring to the walkway] because I'm going to walk on it.' But when they see this [referring to *Le Village imaginé*], they go, oh, all these artists, they're so rich. [197]

Disenfranchisement and perceptions of misplaced funds that could have supported community needs over this public commission were also echoed in my interview with Colleen O'Donnell. Two nearby pools in the southern half of Pointe-Saint-Charles were no longer in service by 2005 when *Le Village imaginé* was installed. O'Donnell explained how this loss factored into the piece's reception:

> People were angry because they said, 'what do you need this thing for?' It was a Montreal artist. They weren't so much for art. It's a matter of taste, but people were saying mean things. And I know they quoted me in *The Gazette* because I said, 'well, it's nothing against the artist. It's just, money could have been better spent.' And then they made all these hills and they put these little… they look like little buildings. What's it all for? It's very artsy, but you're in an area where the kids needed a swimming pool, and there's none, so I can understand. But the poor

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[195] Saint Columba House is an organization that has served the Pointe-Saint-Charles community and advocated for social justice for over 100 years: https://saintcolumbahouse.org/

[196] The successful protests that stopped plans for a casino in the neighbourhood that Gutteridge mentions here took place in the same year that *Le Village imaginé* was installed and the park re-landscaped. See Marcel Sévigny, "Casino… Une Victoire Populaire Impressionnante ! Analyse Des Intérêts En Jeu," La pointe libertaire, March 27, 2006, http://archive.lapointelibertaire.org/node/79.html; CBC News, "Casino and Pointe St-Charles Not a Good Mix: Residents," CBC, June 14, 2005, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/casino-and-pointe-st-charles-not-a-good-mix-residents-1.549502.

[197] Interview with John Gutteridge and Rebecca Rupp. 20:13

> artist always get raked over the coals. It's just sort of forgotten there; it's in the middle of the park.[198]

O'Donnell also has many childhood memories of the park's past iterations when the bandstand was in place and events were held (see figs. 13 and 14). *Le Village imaginé* does not seem to support the same kind of social uses. O'Donnell also highlighted the complexities that arise when a disparity is perceived between the relevance of art vs. acutely-needed amenities and public infrastructure:[199]

> But it's always like that with art, isn't it? People will always say, 'you could have done this and you could have done that.' It's almost like every problem would have to be solved before they allowed money for art, and yet you need art too, in the end. But I'm not so sure about this [referring to *Le Village imaginé*].[200]

Hesitations over *Le Village imaginé* were echoed by another interviewee, Catherine Wells, an artist and co-founder of the Pointe-Saint-Charles Art School.[201] During our interview in January 2023, Wells shared her family ties in the Pointe, as well as her reflections on the neighbourhood and Bourgault's work in Marguerite Bourgeoys Park:

> It's not a bad sculpture, but I'm not sure that's the place for it. It looks alien. It looks like it's crawled in from somewhere else. It doesn't feel … I prefer looking at the factory, the big glass factory.[202] In a sense, that's like sculpture to me.[203]

These ambivalent impressions of *Le Village imaginé* underscore my archival findings, also suggesting that this artwork does not "belong" in either Pointe-Saint-Charles or Marguerite Bourgeoys Park. However, O'Donnell's comment," You need art too," as well as Wells 'reading

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[198] Interview with Colleen O'Donnell. 17:45
[199] Perron, "Une nouvelle oeuvre d'art ne fait pas l'unanimité."
[200] Interview with Colleen O'Donnell. 21:04
[201] The Pointe-Saint-Charles Art School is a community-engaged, non-profit art school located in the southern part of the neighbourhood: https://pointestcharlesartschool.org/
[202] Directly beside the park is the last major functining factory in Pointe-Saint-Charles, Owens Illinois Glass. Though it has changed owners over the years, it has been open for over a century.
[203] Interview with Catherine Wells, interview by Olivia Vidmar, January 30, 2022. 42:53

of the nearby glass factory as "sculpture" highlight the potential for situated perspectives to reveal more complex narratives of public art in Marguerite Bourgeoys Park.

Art About Place

The situated perspectives, memories, and histories expressed above by my interviewees enlightened me to new meanings and uses of the park and public art, including the park as a site of creative practice. Colleen O'Donnell, Rebecca Rupp, John Gutteridge, and Kathleen Vaughan all mentioned the trees in the park and the annual spring flooding. These recollections address how the park was once marshland adjacent to the St. Lawrence River before the shoreline was displaced through dumping from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century.[204] Further, uses of the park as a site of creative practice illuminated not only new narratives of place, but also offer new ways to grapple with the notion of public art in Pointe-Saint-Charles.

Regarding public art's relationship to place, Lucy Lippard's deems public "art about place" to be art that relates to places, and the people in them. [205] Cameron Cartiere and Martin Zebracki define socially-engaged public art practices as "place-aware art."[206] Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose argue that public art should invite negotiation between different social identities, a definition that can only be understood through site-specific study.[207] The creative practices of my interviewees expanded my perception of public art in the Pointe by contending with these complex ties between art, place, and publics. Kathleen Vaughan has explored the history of the

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[204] Alanah Heffez, "Down in the Dumps of Pointe-Saint-Charles History," *Spacing Montreal* (blog), December 27, 2010, http://spacing.ca/montreal/2010/12/27/down-in-the-dumps-of-pointe-saint-charles-history/. The river once touched the park's southern border
[205] Lacy, 121–23.
[206] Cameron Cartiere and Martin Zebracki, *The Everyday Practice of Public Art: Art, Space, and Social Inclusion* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 9, https://www-taylorfrancis-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/pdfviewer/.
[207] Massey and Rose, "Artpoint – Milton Keynes Project," 21.

displaced shoreline through participatory creative practices in Marguerite Bourgeoys Park and in the Southwest borough more broadly.[208] Catherine Wells also shared her creative practice in the park in response to a question I developed during my interview process: "When you think of public art, what comes to mind?" Wells replied:

> I joined this group, and … I just walked and walked and walked during COVID when I could. I did a lot of sketches and started doing a weekly drawing and paintings of the Pointe. So it became public art in the sense that I was painting my neighbourhood. I felt that—even now it's so strange, I walk through Bourgeoys park, I'm walking through one of my paintings, and walking down that path, and there's that tree. And so it's public in the sense that we've done a lot of that. We have the outdoor club, Outdoor Club D'Art to be semi-weirdly bilingual. That's another thing we struggle with, how do we maintain our identity and not just get swamped by these government regulations … we go out all winter, fall, spring, and summer kind of fizzles out, but people love doing it in the bad weather. So a lot of people's paintings and drawings have grown out of those sketches. And so it's public in the sense that we are painting our environment, sitting in it, and people come up and talk to us. Like the woman who came up and told us how they miss the community so much. We were drawing the little theatre at the corner of Rozel and Charlevoix, where what you see is the gray building used to be the movie theatre. And so she was telling us all about it.[209]

Wells' experiences in the Outdoor Club D'Art, painting the neighbourhood and connecting with community members, resonated most strongly for her as public art in the Pointe. Her public creative practice is a means of connection to social and architectural histories of the neighbourhood.

Later in our interview, Wells elaborated on her response to the initial question when discussing the Sherwin Williams factory: "And I mean, to talk about public art—architecture is public art, and it's something that people don't mention."[210] Other interviewees also spoke of personal, community, and public gardens as sites of public art. These perceptions of public art

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[208] Interview with Kathleen Vaughan.
[209] Interview with Catherine Wells. 37:16
[210] Interview with Catherine Wells. 45:24

epitomize the potential of place-listening, a dialogical approach, to resist dominant narratives of place, in favour of personal, subjective and situated perspectives.[211] Further, these testimonies are evidence that just as audience and community perspectives are central pillars in understanding public art's affect and effect in Pointe-Saint-Charles, long-term residents' situated knowledge can reveal new, meaningful and complex notions of public art and place.

[211] Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 34.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have aimed to explore how actors within public art practices, such as artists, funders, and residents, negotiate a sense of place in Pointe-Saint-Charles. These different perspectives have illuminated sites and stakes surrounding public art in this neighbourhood, revealing histories, legacies, and meanings of *Sublime, Monument à la Pointe*, *Le Village imaginé* and *La Pointe All-Dress* that might not otherwise be visible to a contemporary observer.

In Chapter One, I used a critical place-making framework to analyze the re-imagining and renewal plans for the sites of the three publicly-commissioned works considered in this thesis: *Sublime, Monument à la Pointe* and *Le Village imaginé*. I drew on archival evidence from different actors in local public art practices, including internal documents from the BAP and community-authored sources, to explore power dynamics and place-making patterns behind the commissioning and creation of these public artworks. The City of Montreal's minimal citizen involvement and use of public art to highlight heritage in the Pointe, particularly in the cases of *Monument à la Pointe* and *Le Village imaginé*, revealed how publicly-commissioned art was a tool for place-making in urban renewal plans for Pointe-Saint-Charles. As explored above, creative place-making has often been harnessed for economic rather than socially motivated gains in contexts of urban renewal.[212] Elaine Speight has found that fixed readings of place, which neglect the dynamic and diverse facets of its identity, inform place-making in public art and support an economic agenda above all.[213] In Chapter Two, her method of place-listening thus informed my approach to unearthing narratives of place that might be overlooked by place-making.

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[212] Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 28.
[213] Speight, 28.

In Chapter Two, I introduced a fourth case study, the community mural *La Pointe All-Dress.* I reviewed relevant scholarship to explore the participatory and socially-engaged practices which led to the creation of this work, and the ambivalent potential of art in a gentrifying neighbourhood. The interpretation of history represented by the mural may have created a fixed understanding of place that overlooked some residents' experiences amidst deindustrialization and gentrification in Pointe-Saint-Charles.[214] The remainder of this chapter complicated and nuanced these findings and those expressed in Chapter One through selected excerpts from interviews I conducted with six long-term residents of the Pointe.

My methodology, which combined oral history and the embodied practice of place-listening, illuminated the situated perspectives of long-term residents [215] These perspectives underscored the multiple, varied potentialities of public art in Pointe-Saint-Charles; it can act as an agent of urban change and disenfranchisement, or serve as a site of learning and heritage, or provide sign of care, or become a method of creative and social practice. Further, my interviewees' perceptions of place and the role of public art within those narratives shaped this research at every stage. My initial research question presented a binary wherein I expected to locate each public artwork. As I progressed in my research and embarked on the interview process, it became apparent that a binary question could not account for the complex and contradictory ties between public art and urban change in Pointe-Saint-Charles. Place-listening and oral history allowed me to recognize a shared authority in terms of the collective and individual ways that places are experienced in a gentrifying neighbourhood with a rich industrial and activist history. Art history conjoined with place-listening and oral history allowed me to

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[214] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class.*, 285; Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 30.
[215] Speight, 28, 29.

grapple with these possibilities in the Pointe and centre the situated perspectives of my interviewees. As Catherine Wells' closing comments on public art illustrate, this methodology can offer a new way to explore not only the polyvalence of art in place, but also new and meaningful ways to understand situated and socially-engaged public art practices.

In forming my concluding thoughts to this thesis, I have often returned to a question proposed by Dolores Hayden in her 1996 book, *The Power of Place*: "What kind of public processes and techniques best represent commitment to social history in public places?"[216] In Pointe-Saint-Charles, a commitment to social history in public places is a vital element in any discussion of public art. In considering the social and spatial sites illuminated by my research, I agree with the conclusions drawn by Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose; public art practices in Pointe-Saint-Charles should indeed invite engagement from diverse social groups in public space and, I would add, engagement with the social histories of place.[217] In response to Hayden's question, which asks what techniques and processes could lead to these outcomes in public art practices, I would respond by returning to the embodied and durational practice of place-listening for its potential to "produce spaces of resistance within the dominant narratives of place" by centering the perspectives of people for whom a neighbourhood undergoing change is still home.[218]

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[216] Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (MIT Press, 1997), 7.
[217] Massey and Rose, "Artpoint – Milton Keynes Project," 21.
[218] Speight, "Place Listening as Cosmopolitan Practice, or 'How Dare You Rubbish My Town!,'" 34.

Figures

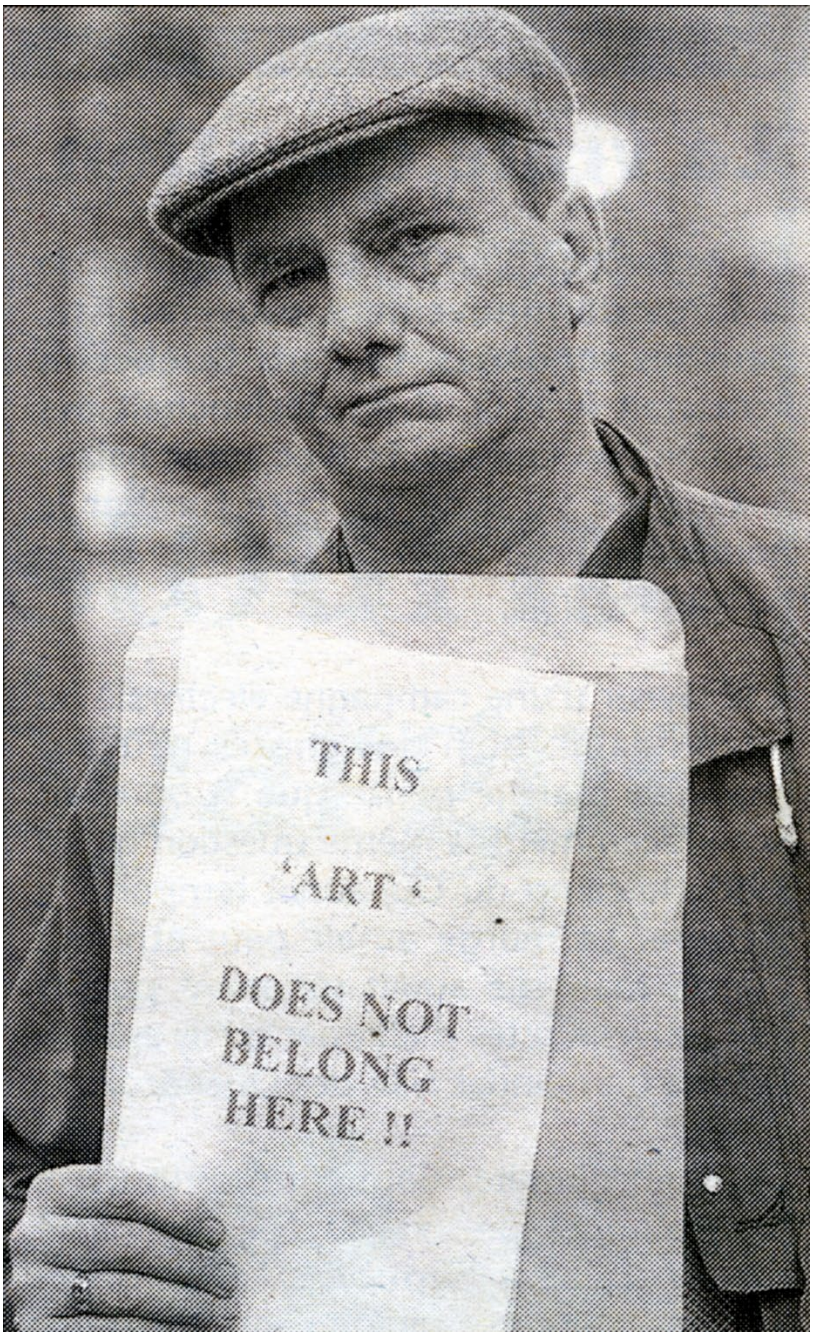


Figure 1 – A citizen protests a new public artwork in Marguerite Bourgeoys Park. Source: Perron, Mathieu R. "Une nouvelle oeuvre d'art ne fait pas l'unanimité". *La Voix populaire.* 19 June 2005. Saint Henri Historical Society.

Figure 2- A map of Pointe-Saint-Charles identifies sites discussed in this thesis. 1. *Monument à la Pointe,* 2. Habitations Sherwin Williams, 3. The Lachine Canal, 4. *La Pointe All-Dress* 5. *Le Village imagine,* 6. *Sublime.* Source: Google Earth, 2023.

Figure 3 – *Sublime* (1978) by Maurice Lemieux in front of Habitations Favard. Source: photograph by author, February 2022.

Figure 4 – *Sublime* (1978) bearing its original blue colour. Source: Ville de Montréal, September 30th, 2006.

Figure 5- *Sublime* as pictured in the inauguration advertisement for Habitation Favard in *La Voix populaire.* Source: "Inauguration des Habitations Favard". *La Voix populaire*. 22 May 1979. Saint Henri Historical Society.

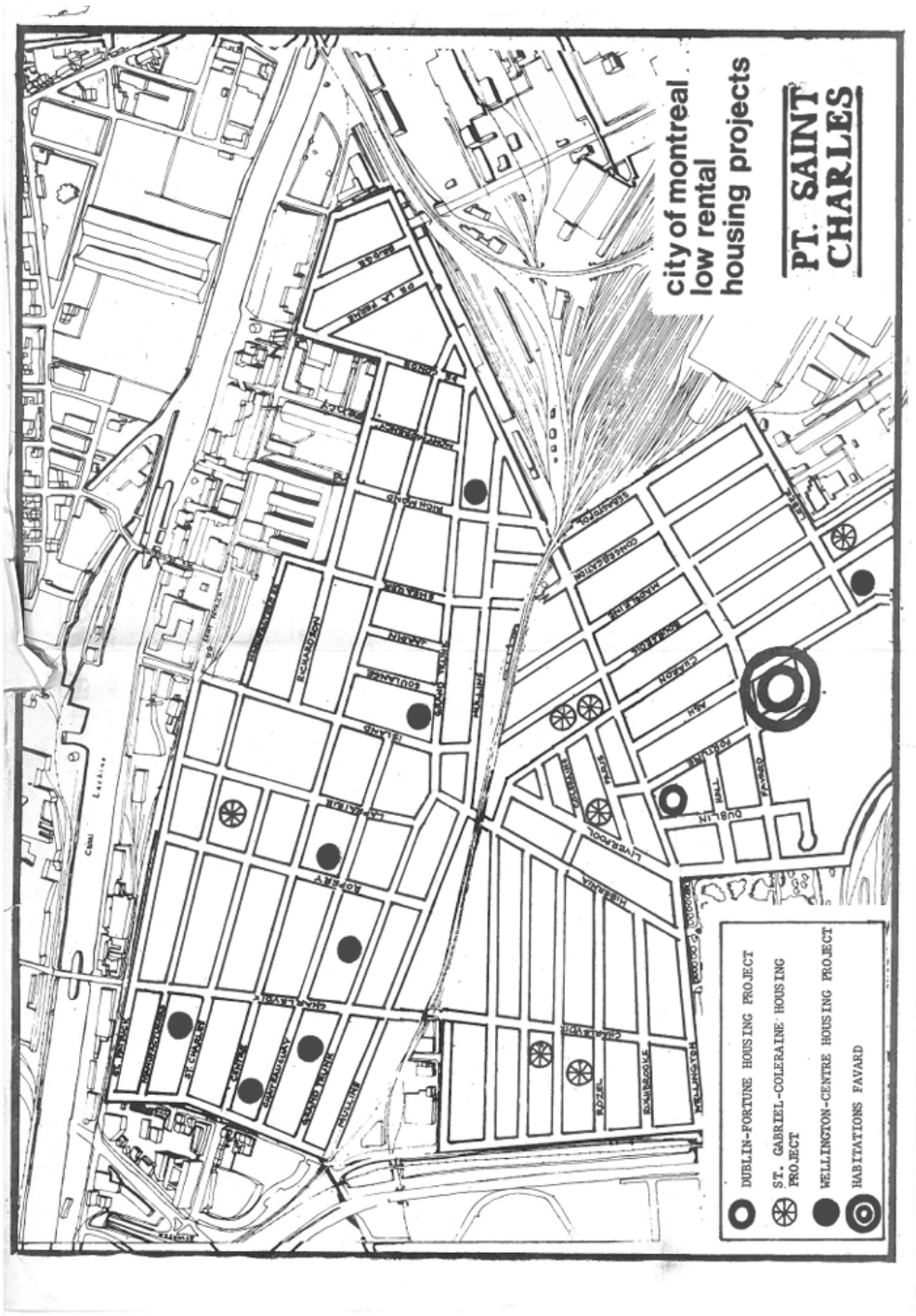


Figure 6 – A map showing City of Montreal low rental housing projects in Pointe-Saint-Charles. The largest concentric circles indicate the location of Habitations Favard. Though it is undated, Habitations Favard was completed by 1978, so we can assume this would have been from the late 1970s. Source: 'City of Montreal Low-Rental Housing Projects- Our Pointe 3'. Pointe Action's Citizen's Council, n.d. MUA 2008-0025.01.07.365. McGill University Archives,

Archives populaires de Pointe Saint-Charles, Fonds Clinique communautaire de Pointe Saint-Charles.

Figure 7- The roundabout where *Monument à la Pointe* (2001) is located is visible in this Google Earth screenshot. Source: Google Earth, 2022.

Figure 8- *Monument à la Pointe* (2001) by Gilles Mihalcean. Source: photo by author, February 2023

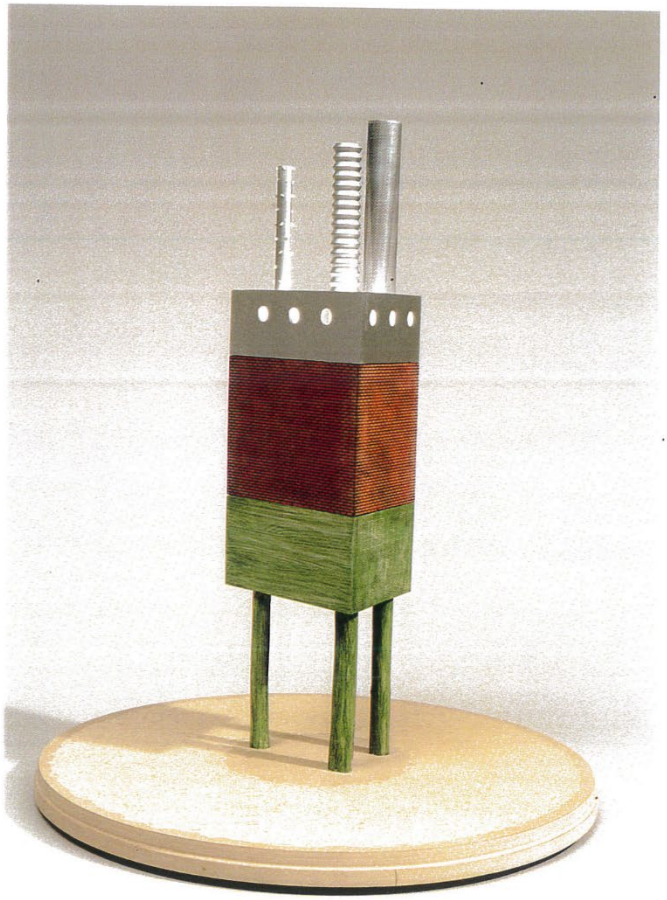


Figure 9- A maquette from Gilles Mihalcean's proposal for *Monument à la Pointe.* Source: Gilles Mihalcean, "Presentation 'La Pointe'" (Ville de Montréal, Service de la culture, Direction développement culturel, Division Équipements culturels et Bureau d'art public, October 12, 2000), 2, dossier 3/3.1, BAP Centre de documentation.

Figure 10- *Le Village imaginé* by Pierre Bourgault in Marguerite Bourgeoys Park. Source: photo by author, February 2023.

Figure 11- Architectural element of *Le Village imaginé* by Pierre Bourgault in Marguerite Bourgeoys Park. Source: photo by author, February 2023.

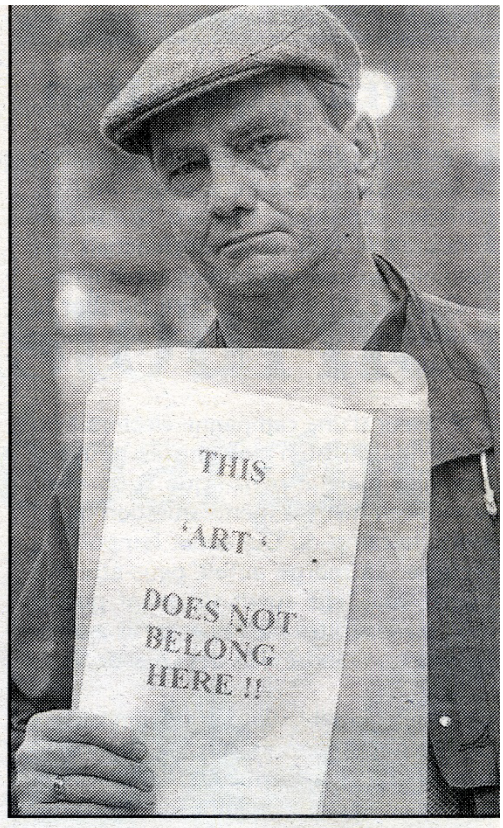
La mairesse de l'arrondissement Sud-Ouest Jacqueline Montpetit, la responsable de la culture à la ville de Montréal Francine Sénécal et l'artiste Pierre Bourgault, s'entretiennent devant la structure principale de l'œuvre.

(Photos : Martin A. Chamberland)

réaliser «une sculpture qui habite et que l'on habite».

Une immense structure orne le milieu du parc, tandis que des petites

interminable d'une ficelle, veille déjà sur les parcours que traceront les usagers entre ces nouveaux espaces », a-t-il indiqué.



Un citoyen en désaccord avec l'im plantation de l'œuvre.

Figure 12 - A page from a 2005 *La Voix populaire* article. Here, we see a juxtaposition of two photos: on the left, the mayor, the artist and a BAP representative stand near the *Le Village imaginé*. On the right, a citizen protests this piece. Source: "Une Nouvelle Oeuvre d'art Ne Fait Pas l'unanimité". *La Voix populaire.* 19 June 2005. Saint Henri Historical Society.

Figure 13- Arial view of Margeurite Bourgeoys Park, which offers a clear image of the theatre/bandstand and trees. Source: "Vue diverses/inconnu", May 10th, 1962, VM94-B9-001, Ville de Montréal, Section des archives, Fonds Service des affaires institutionnelles (1992-1994). https://archivesdemontreal.ica-atom.org/vm94-b9-001.

Notes: *Deindustrializing Montreal* by Steven High pointed me toward the archival folder where I found this photograph. None of the photographs in this folder are identified geographically, so I am grateful for this publication as I may not have otherwise found this image of the park.

Figure 14- A close view of the theatre/bandstand in Marguerite Bourgeoys Park. Source: “Théâtre d'été au parc Marguerite Bourgeoys,” 1972, D9F-3-35, Ville de Montréal, Section des archives. https://archivesdemontreal.ica-atom.org/theatre-dete-au-parc-marguerite-bourgeoys-1972.

Figure 15- A detail on the western end of *La Pointe All-Dress* (2013) showing a representation of Indigenous people on Turtle Island, as well as a canal lined by industrial buildings. Source: photo by author, February 2023.

Figure 16 – A detail towards the middle of *La Pointe All-Dress* (2013) showing co-op housing and two dancing figures**.** Source: photo by author, February 2023.

Figure 17- *La Pointe All-Dress* (2013) in its entirety. Source: photo by author, February 2023.

Figure 18 – A detail towards the eastern end of *La Pointe All-Dress* (2013) showing a tunnel, inspired by one of the first actions of painting on the wall Source: Photo by author, February 2023.

Figure 19- A detail towards the middle of *La Pointe All-Dress* (2013) showing a close-up of two figures dancing. On the left figure's clothing note a small fleur-de-lys. The clothing of the figure to the right likewise includes a small shamrock. Source: photo by author, February 2023.

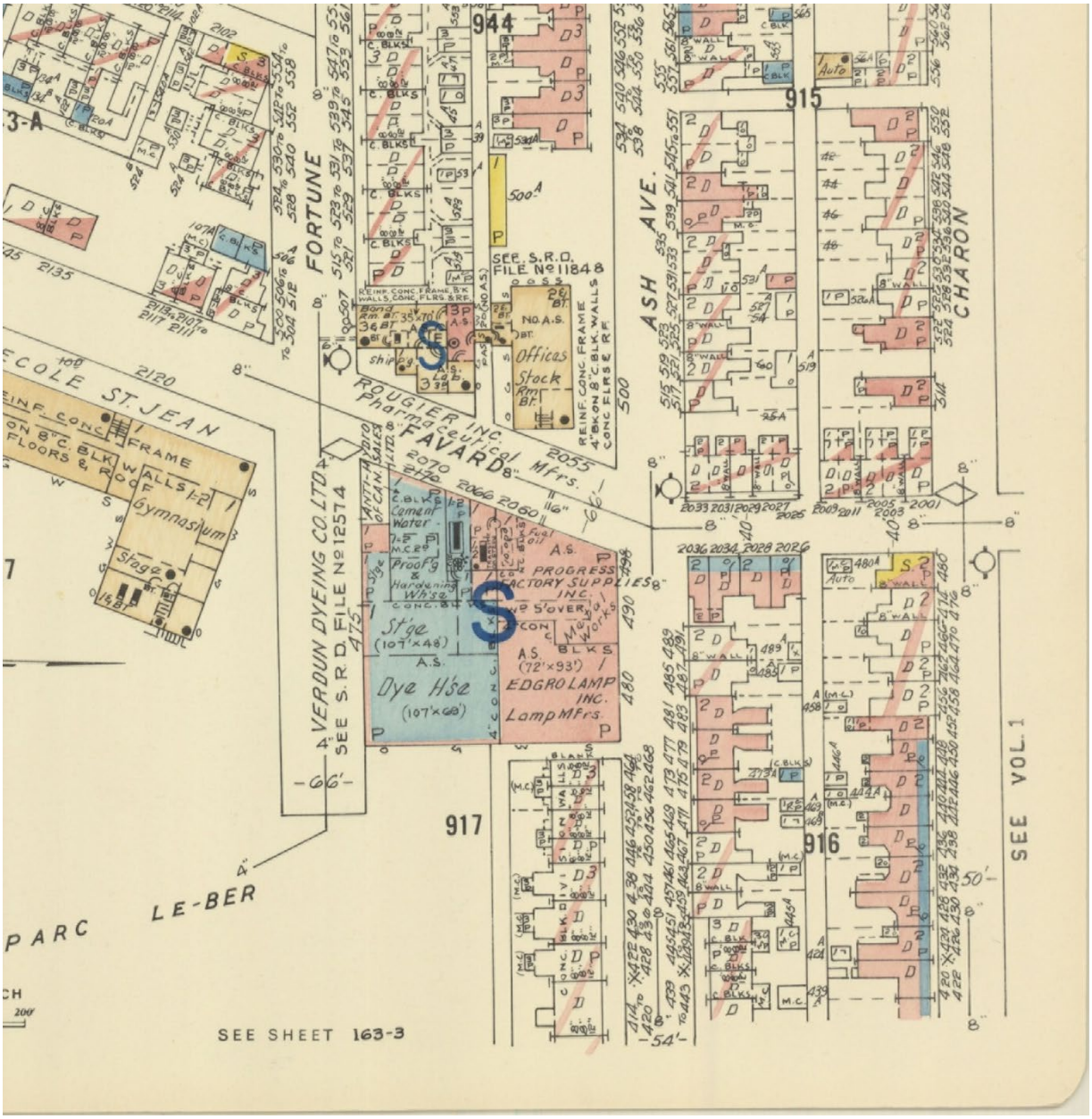


Figure 20 – A fire insurance map from 1961 where Verdun Dying Co. Ltd is visible between Fortune and Ash Avenue, exactly where Habitations Favard was built almost two decades later. Source: Underwriters' Survey Bureau Limited, Insurance plan of the city of Montreal, volume 4, 1961. BAnQ. https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2244196

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