

**Imaging a Sense of Place and Community:**  
**Curating Socially Engaged Art Interventions through Art-Based Action Research (ABAR)**

**Elsy Zavarce**

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By: **Elsy Zavarce**

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Signed by the final examining committee:

Dr. Miranda D'Amico	Chair
Dr. Lynn Sanders-Bustle	External examiner
Dr. Arpi Hamalian	Examiner
Dr. Carmela Cucuzzella	Examiner
Dr. Kathleen Vaughan	Examiner
Dr. Lorrie Blair	Thesis Supervisor

Date of the defence: March 17, 2025

Approved by

Juan Carlos Castro	Chair of the Department
Annie G��rin	Dean of the Fine Arts Faculty

## **Abstract**

### **Imaging a Sense of Place and Community: Curating Socially Engaged Art Interventions through Art-Based Action Research**

**Elsy Zavarce, PhD  
Concordia University, 2025**

This dissertation investigates how innovative Socially Engaged Art (SEA) practices can cultivate a sense of community and place within rapidly transforming urban environments, focusing on Griffintown, Montreal—a historically post-industrial neighbourhood undergoing significant redevelopment. Employing Art-Based Action Research (ABAR) as its methodological framework, the study examines how art interventions can inspire social change and fortify community bonds. Three SEA interventions—a photography workshop, a collective mapping exercise, and a virtual open call—engaged diverse participants, fostering reinterpretations of Griffintown's spaces and cultivating connections among its evolving communities. Through iterative refinement and formative evaluations, the research deepened insights into the potential of SEA to foster meaningful community engagement. By fostering creativity, critical thinking, and dialogue, the interventions built a sense of place and community and contributed to the broader discourse on art's role in society. Findings highlight SEA's capacity to nurture a sense of belonging and collective identity, particularly in areas experiencing rapid urban transformation. The study emphasizes the role of socially engaged artists as curators and educators who facilitate dialogue, social integration, and cultural resilience. This dissertation advocates for curatorial practices that prioritize inclusivity, participation, and the empowerment of marginalized communities, proposing a model for curating SEA that bridges artistic, educational, and community-building endeavours. By addressing the intersections of art education, urban pedagogy, community engagement, and cultural policy, this work offers new frameworks for developing SEA interventions that promote cultural democracy and social change. This research's theoretical and practical contributions provide valuable insights for artists, educators, institutions, and policymakers, paving the way for inclusive, sustainable, and participatory pluralism in urban contexts.

*Keywords:* Socially Engaged Art (SEA), Curatorial Practice, Sense of place, community building, Griffintown,

## **Dedication**

To my family—José, Stefania, Alejandrina, and José Andrés—for your unwavering love, support, and steadfast belief in me. To my dad, who walked this journey alongside me, becoming a fellow learner, always accompanied by his high school sweetheart, my mother.

Furthermore, to all who dream of building communities and places of belonging.

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To my family—Jose, my partner, Stefania, Alejandrina, and Jose Andres—you are the three pillars of my life. Your patience, understanding, and love have been my anchor these five years. To my incredible dad, thank you for your encouragement and curiosity and for being a fellow Griffintown, ABAR, and SEA learner.

To my longtime and new friends in Montreal, the generosity, enthusiasm, sensibility, and talent of my participants, colleagues, and everyone who has shared this transformative journey with me, as well as your kindness, belief, and collaboration, have made this work possible.

Thank you all for being part of this extraordinary journey. Merci, muchas gracias.

## **Preface**

This dissertation represents the culmination of a deeply personal and professional journey that explores the intersections of art, community, and socially engaged practices in Griffintown, Montreal. As an artist, educator, and researcher, I have long been fascinated by how art can catalyze dialogue, preserve collective memory, and drive social change.

As an immigrant, I encountered the unique challenges of adapting to a new cultural context in Montreal while navigating the complexities of learning a third language. Undertaking this research as a newcomer during the pandemic and its aftermath presented significant hurdles. However, these experiences profoundly shaped my academic path and deeply influenced the central themes of this research—community, belonging, and resilience.

The journey has been transformative, informed by the contributions of participants and collaborators and my reflections on belonging and place. The cultural shocks of relocation and the realities of aging in a foreign environment often felt daunting. However, they became integral to my exploration of socially engaged art and its potential to foster meaningful connections. This dissertation reflects academic inquiry and is a testament to the strength and adaptability required to embrace change and find one's place in unfamiliar surroundings.

Throughout this journey, I have come to appreciate the transformative power of art as a bridge between cultures, generations, and identities. I hope this research not only contributes to the field but inspires others to create spaces of understanding and belonging amidst life's uncertainties.

This work is dedicated to everyone who believes in the power of art to inspire, connect, and transform.

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## INTRODUCTION

In a world where urban landscapes are increasingly shaped by rapid development and migration, the question of how communities form, persist, and evolve becomes ever more pressing. Amid this transformation, art emerges as a powerful bridge to foster connection, belonging, and a shared sense of place.

My research examines how innovative Socially Engaged Art (SEA) practices contribute to building a sense of community and place. By employing Art-Based Action Research (ABAR), I strategically engaged with communities to foster transformative experiences and social change (Helguera, 2011; Frasz et al., 2017). My study focuses on Griffintown, a neighbourhood in Montreal that has undergone a significant transformation. With its rich history and major real estate projects reshaping its landscape, Griffintown provides a unique and timely backdrop for this exploration. As both the location of my research and my new hometown, it offers an ideal setting to investigate the dynamics of community development.

A community-centric approach guided the research. ABAR methodology was used to implement three distinct SEA interventions: a photography workshop, a collective mapping exercise, and a virtual open call. Each intervention was designed to invite community participation, encourage reinterpretation of spaces, and envision the urban landscape. The iterative nature of these interventions, paired with formative evaluations, allowed for continuous refinement and adaptation, ultimately shaping the research process and its outcomes.

Throughout these interventions, my goal was to engage the community in artistic experiences that fostered connections, shared narratives, and the imagined creation of alternative futures—inclusive, plural, and participatory futures. My examination of SEA extended beyond the artistic process to consider broader concepts such as pedagogy, urban sensorial experiences, sense of place, built environment, imaginaries, material culture, critical spatial practices, and collaborative communities of practice.

This thesis presents the research findings and reflects on a transformative journey, where each chapter builds on the previous one, creating a cohesive narrative of personal and intellectual growth. The first two chapters lay the foundation by establishing the research framework and context, while chapters three to five focus on the detailed exploration of the three interventions that form the core of the investigation. The final chapter provides a reflective synthesis of the research questions and explores future directions, offering a comprehensive conclusion to the study. While each chapter can stand alone, they are designed to be interconnected, inviting the reader to engage with the journey of discovery and development.

I selected a photograph from my Resilient Gaze series for each chapter's frontispiece. Although this series was created before my research proposal, it captured my emotions and became my inquiry's prelude. Through this series, I reflect on the movements and layers of belonging, displacement, return, fluidity, and resilience that shape my experience. (Details about the concept and history of the optical lens and the series are provided in the endnote <sup>1</sup>)

Chapter I introduces the research purpose, questions, and background, establishing the context for the investigation. It also explores the dynamics of Griffintown, a neighbourhood with a

rich industrial past that is now rapidly changing. This change impacts the community and provides a ground for examining how collective and situated art practices can promote social change.

Chapter II delves into the theoretical framework and methodology, addressing key concepts such as imaging, sense of place, community dynamics, sensory aspects, SEA qualities, community engagement strategies, Futures Studies, and built environment pedagogies. This chapter provides the theoretical and methodological foundation for understanding how innovative SEA practices can contribute to community development in Griffintown.

Chapters III through V detail the three SEA interventions, each building on the insights gained from the previous one. These interventions were designed to foster community engagement, social connection, and a sense of place through collaborative and creative processes. Chapter III presents my first intervention: a photography workshop with selected community members. This experience informed my second intervention, with formative evaluations guiding refinements throughout the process (Collins et al., 2004). The First Intervention, initiated during the fall of 2022, marked the beginning of this endeavour. Chapter IV presents my second intervention: an urban mapping workshop. It builds on the insights from the photography workshop. Furthermore, Chapter V discusses my third intervention: Disruption, an open Art /Design call. It presents the participation, the online exhibition, and the proposed themes and examines the contribution to learning how to develop a sense of community and place throughout SEA.

In Chapter VI, I discuss the transformative potential of curatorial practice as a tool for community engagement and social change. This chapter explores the intersection of curating, socially engaged art, and art education, calling on curators and cultural workers to recognize and utilize the power of these practices to foster dialogue, solidarity, and positive change within

communities. This power is not just theoretical but a practical tool that can bring about real change in our communities.

My research has practical implications for developing a pedagogy that can guide the creation of inclusive, accessible, and sustainable Socially Engaged Art (SEA) interventions. These interventions are crucial for building community and deepening participants' understanding of the urban experience. The findings of my study offer valuable insights into how to create a sense of place, belonging, and community. Additionally, they support the growing trend of institutional agencies towards fostering active community participation. This knowledge equips practitioners and educators with the necessary tools to design and implement meaningful, impactful interventions that resonate with and empower communities.

The second and third ABAR interventions built upon the foundation of the first while introducing unique elements that emphasized different aspects of community engagement. The second intervention focused on enhancing social interaction and fostering dialogue, while the third prioritized active social interaction and creative, open participation. This third intervention encapsulated a year-long ABAR SEA implementation process characterized by continuous research, planning, execution, evaluation, and redefinition. Each participant's contribution to the DISRUPTION art/design call became a starting point for dialogue, plurality, and transformation, demonstrating the dynamic nature of these interventions.

As my research progressed, it became evident that curating, traditionally associated with selecting and exhibiting artworks within institutional settings, takes on new dimensions when approached through social engagement. This approach requires developing social skills, trust, and a

personal commitment to community care rooted in affection while simultaneously delivering curated visual communications and exhibitions.

I concluded that curatorial socially engaged art is vital in promoting cultural democracy by fostering inclusive environments for encounters, dialogue, and collective action. This is particularly crucial in migration, where individuals and communities often face cultural displacement, erasure, and marginalization. Through curatorial socially engaged art, migrant communities can actively participate with their cultural agency, negotiating their place within new cultural landscapes. This practice actualizes the fundamental human right to participate in cultural life, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948). As such, it is indispensable to any artistic program, promoting cultural democracy, actively empowering communities to shape their cultural landscape, and honouring the universal human right to cultural participation and self-expression.

Through this ABAR research, I have developed a curatorial approach to SEA, framing it as a means for envisioning future curatorial practices. By critically examining the roles of socially engaged artists as curators and educators, I have highlighted their potential to drive significant societal change. My work in SEA, encompassing roles as an artist, scholar, curator, and community member, has dramatically enhanced social integration, participation, collaboration, creativity, and agency within the communities involved. In this sense, my research contributes to developing theories and methods in ABAR and SEA, offering best practices for curating collaborative, participatory, and community-focused art interventions. By fostering creativity, critical thinking, and dialogue, I built a sense of place and community and ultimately contributed to the broader discourse on art's role in society.

This research has been a journey of fueling imagination, passion, and learning, where I sought to bridge singularities and foster meaningful dialogues. I created spaces of expression, creativity, and social connection by connecting urban spaces with communities and institutions. Through socially engaged art, I have woven together the threads of resilience, transformation, and belonging, amplifying voices and inspiring collective action. This work embodies a commitment to love, care, and the enduring power of art to imagine and shape more inclusive, compassionate, and sustainable futures. My socially engaged curatorial dissertation has integrated my roles and experiences as an artist, educator, and researcher. Through gestures of affection, care, and solidarity, I nurtured and strengthened creativity and expression, allowing for the imagination of alternative futures and community building. This art practice presents itself as a way of being, in a specific time and place, situational, contingent, and loving.

**Figure 1**

*A collective moment from the three ABAR SEA interventions.*

Showcasing the synergy between participants and the urban landscapes of Griffintown. It serves as a visual acknowledgment of the profound contributions of all involved, weaving connections between art, community, and place. Source: E. Zavarce, 2024. On the next page:

<p>1</p>			 <p>GRIFFINTOWN</p>	<p>SEA   ABAR</p> 
<p>Fonderie Darling</p> 			<p>2</p>	
				
	<p>3</p>		<p>Horse Palace</p> 	
	<p>Disruption</p> 			<p>community</p> 
<p>Transformative futures</p>			<p>2</p>	

# I



*Golden awe-inspiring Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal, EZ 2020*

*I would like to begin by acknowledging that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtià:ke/Montréal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.<sup>3</sup>*

## CHAPTER I | PLACING THE GROUNDS

This research journey begins with a passion for art, education, and community development, nurtured through personal experiences and surrounded by the urban landscape of Montreal's Griffintown, my new neighbourhood. As a researcher, I bring a unique positionality to this study, influenced by my experiences as an artist, educator, migrant, and community-engaged practitioner. My passion for art and design has been nurtured through years of practice and pedagogy. I am committed to exploring the transformative potential of art and design in fostering inclusive and resilient communities.

In this first chapter, I share my background and experiences that have shaped my positionality, setting the stage for this research journey. I then delve into the context of Griffintown, a contested area undergoing rapid urban transformation. I examine its history, including the Horse Palace Land, and the complex dynamics of gentrification, revealing its impact on the community. By doing so, I establish a foundation for understanding the potential of collective art practices in promoting community development and social change in this dynamic neighbourhood.

### ***Purpose and Objectives***

The urgency of the current global challenges, the rapid gentrification of cities, and the mass displacement of communities necessitate innovative approaches in public art, socially engaged practices, and institutional partnerships. These are academic pursuits and urgent calls to action to promote solidarity, conviviality, and connection with our surroundings. (Bourriaud, 1998; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Helguera, 2011).

Living at a time of increasing economic, social, and geographical mobility, traditional relationships with the community seem increasingly unpredictable and undefined. Displaced people and forced migrants like me, amid political events and social displacement, reflect on and make efforts to redefine and reclaim place identities. In this sense, traditional place-bound identity markers are changing. These reflections led me to ponder: How can Socially Engaged Art (SEA) contribute to developing a sense of community and place? Can SEA provide a unique opportunity for the community to engage and learn? What are the challenges in implementing the SEA interventions to make them participatory, collaborative, and imaginative?

How can I facilitate SEA intervention to learn about the urban environment and material recognition to enhance people's lives as private and communal beings? In what way can ABAR help me facilitate SEA to achieve dialogic forms of co-constructive learning with participants? What is the socially engaged artist's role in communities? What is the value of SEA in the community? What values are we promoting?

My musings on these background questions drove me to consolidate concerns in one guiding research question: What could be the role of SEA curators and educators like me in helping the sense of community and place?

***Positionality: Chronicles of Identity: Nurturing Passion, Shaping Cities, and Transforming Education through Art and Design***

***From Passion to Pedagogy***

Who am I? What brought me to this moment? In this section, I will chronologically describe specific experiences that have shaped me and present my positionality.

I was born, grew up, and studied architecture in Venezuela, where I had passionate professors about the heritage of my city. From them, I learned to love Maracaibo, the city that took us in after the company transferred my father from Barquisimeto. Also, in those days, I learned about urban agency and articulated social bonds with our colleagues and professors, dreaming about the city we should have. Those fulfilling experiences led me to a career as a professor at the Rafael Urdaneta University (URU) Architecture School. Later, I won tenure at the new Graphic Design School of Zulia University.

During my experience as a professor in the Architecture and Graphic Design School at Zulia University, I always taught about the importance of learning about the environment and history of your city to make you feel involved and develop civic responsibility. I used art-based strategies to help build the competencies of creativity, sensibility, and expressivity as a source of empathy with the environment, culture, and diversity. As a professor and researcher, I developed methodologies to approach design in urban space and worked to consider the needs of communities (Bloomer et al., 1977). I also proposed a conceptual framework for using contemporary art as a sensibility, plurality, and means of knowledge production. Contemporary art has a flexible and multidisciplinary nature

that can create new paradigms such as interdisciplinary, ecosystemic, and problem-solving (de Arriba et al., 2019; Guédez, 1999, 2005).

At the start of my career as a professor, I became a mother once, twice, three times. Balancing both roles was challenging, yet motherhood is central to my positionality, shaping my lived experience and academic journey. My children are my tripod in life—the grounding force that gives balance and direction to everything I do. They are why we migrated. Their voices, calling me ‘Mami Linda’, are my most cherished title—a reminder that beyond theory and research, my work is deeply personal, rooted in love, and the lens through which I navigate displacement, resilience, and care in the ever-evolving act of creating community across borders.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Collective Art Practices and Learning Together***

In my application for this Ph.D. in 2018, I wrote, “I deeply believe in the new ways of connecting, in the solidarity of the networks of knowledge and creativity that are showing a new face for humankind” (Zavarce, 2018, p. 1). While this dissertation is not directly related to my original application, my initial research proposal focused on ESCOLARTE, an art education project for my city, Maracaibo.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I acknowledge Dr. Arpi Hamalian, my examiner, for asking about and highlighting the importance of motherhood in my positionality.

<sup>2</sup> The pandemic forced me to change my original research project; travelling to Venezuela was impossible for three years, and the conditions in the city and the museum where I was coordinating the project became increasingly challenging. Even so, I have continued to coordinate ESCOLARTE during these years. This Ph.D. has helped me persevere and sustain my vision for the program. ESCOLARTE is my art education program based in Maracaibo, Venezuela. It aims to

Later, in 2020, reflecting on my experiences as an artist, I expressed in a class essay, “But as an artist, it is being in contact with other artists, sharing their creative process and energy on loving to make art that has taught me the most” (Zavarce, 2020, p.4). Moreover, that was the idea when Lourdes Peñaranda, artist and friend, and I came out at the beginning of the millennium with the collective art Project: *Ene Incidentes* (1999-2014), a project that challenged us to go beyond, breaking boundaries, being fearless, and share the passion of art. Artists such as Luis Gómez, who participated from the beginning, and others who joined later in the process, embraced the project with a strong sense of belonging, transforming it into a genuinely collective initiative among artists. When I wrote that essay, I realized that I missed that energy.

Trying to recapture this synergy of *Ene Incidentes* (1999-2014), in 2017, I invited two friends, Neydalid Molero and Maria Veronica Machado, to develop an art project. I proposed the idea of a project with three stages or moments for sharing thoughts from readings, reflections, and the sharing of the creative process. We named it *Cuerpo en Cuestion* (Body in Question), and the exhibition was presented at the Zulia Contemporary Museum of Art (MACZUL, 2018). These experiences led me to think about the collective process of art making, the joy of learning together,

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foster creativity and critical thinking among high school students through engagement with contemporary art practices. The program encourages young participants to explore their identities and cultural heritage while addressing local and global challenges through artistic expression. It serves as a platform for social transformation, offering workshops that connect students with their communities and the wider world. Despite the challenges posed by Venezuela’s socio-political and economic crises, I have remained committed to coordinating ESCOLARTE, continuously adapting and evolving to the challenges of my country. My dedication to the program reflects my belief in the transformative power of art education as a tool for resilience and social change. Through ESCOLARTE, I aim to nurture a generation of thinkers and creators who critically engage with their surroundings, contributing to a more connected and reflective society. This year, I have begun to develop the website: <https://elsyzavarce.wixstudio.com/escolarte>

and the community of practice that comes from this. Moreover, it made me think about how I could expand the notion of art to enhance the lives of the communities (Zavarce et al., 2024).

### *Art and Resilience*

When I started this Ph.D., having moved from Venezuela to Canada, not by choice,<sup>3</sup> I was experiencing migrant/exile syndrome.<sup>4</sup> During that time, I created a series of watercolours, thinking about the phenomenon of migration in terms of the constant human flows of humanity throughout history. In contemplating my feelings and circumstances of migration, I came to see myself not merely as a product of a national crisis but as part of a broader, universal, and timeless inquiry into belonging, identity, and the meaning of territories. (Chambers, 2008) I thought about my origins and

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<sup>3</sup> Migration and identity became an important part of my positionality. Without planning, my world changed because of migration, or in my case, exile.

The socio-economic and political crisis in Venezuela since 2002 drove us to consider emigration for my children. We planned my kid's emigration for years and waited as much as possible in Venezuela. Stefania, my oldest, was able to graduate from architecture in the faculty where my husband and I worked. However, when the time arrived for my second and third children to study in Venezuela, the situation got extremely difficult in my city (power cuts every day, violence, riots, food scarcity. University closing for many weeks due to protests and lack of resources.) so the decision was made; Alejandrina and Jose Andres had to study abroad. My husband and I waited as long as possible until the living conditions were challenging. Ultimately, in my case, my family relations with opposition leaders made my life in Venezuela a risk for my life. I Had to leave many months before I was planning. However always thinking it was for a short period. Until things got better. I said to myself at the beginning, I am a student and refused the term Migrant. It was during the pandemic that I began to accept the idea that I was a migrant. I am still waiting for things to get better in Venezuela.

<sup>4</sup> I refer to migrant /exile because my forced migration was due to the real fear of Human rights violation: [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_developpement-enjeux\\_developpement/response\\_conflict-reponse\\_conflits/crisis-crisis/venezuela.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/response_conflict-reponse_conflits/crisis-crisis/venezuela.aspx?lang=eng)

identity<sup>5</sup>. Living in Montreal, in a country where 23% <sup>6</sup>of the population is new Canadians, I also encountered immigrants from all over the world, often finding connections with them or learning about other points of view and cultures.

Art and university were my ways of mending from the journey. Initially, I immersed myself in reading about art education, migration, the building environment, philosophy, making art, and the collective art process. However, the pandemic lockdown hit, and another layer of complex feelings, fears, and anxiety appeared.

At the beginning of the 2020 lockdown, I met again with my two friends, Neydalid and Maria Veronica, and this occasion was in virtual space. We met virtually from our new places in Canada, Argentina, and Colombia to resume the conversation and consider our positions as migrants amid the global pandemic and lockdown. This time, we devised a virtual art call: *Confined Bodies / Cuerpos confinados*. Nearly 100 artists from about 80 countries answered the call between April and May 2020. In *Confined Bodies*, we created a virtual dialogue about the uncertain times of the pandemic, developing resilience among the participants.<sup>7</sup>

Our article, "Art as a Transformative Collaboration: A Journal of Vital Encounters to Create the Virtual Exhibition *Confined Bodies*" (Zavarce et al., 2022), raised the question: How can an

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<sup>5</sup> I was born in Montreal by chance. My father received a scholarship, and a job offer from the Canadian company that owned the Power Company of the West of Venezuela. As part of his training, he was required to complete a course at the company's headquarters in Montreal. My parents, who were high school sweethearts, got married and moved to Canada together. After 15 months, they returned to Venezuela with a baby—me.

I was born Canadian but had never lived in Canada. I hardly spoke English and did not know French. It was not until much later in life, when I was supposedly retired, that I began to connect with my Canadian roots.

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada (2022):

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026a-eng.htm>,

<sup>7</sup> Web page of *Confined Bodies* virtual exhibition: <https://cuerposconfinados.wixsite.com/home/info>

artistic dialogue help build a sense of community? How can art assist in resilience? How does a community of practice foster a sense of community? I realized how transformative art can be in fostering a sense of connection and resilience during times of profound isolation. The project demonstrated how artistic collaboration could transcend physical boundaries, cultivating a sense of belonging and shared experience.<sup>8</sup>.

Later, in 2021, still during the extended lockdown and amid the feelings and reflections of being a migrant artist in Montreal, I started using photography as a reconstructive emotional gaze of the city in the series *Dream Walking*. I showed it in the art exhibition *Resilient Gaze* (2021) at the George-Vanier Center (CCGV).<sup>9</sup> Using a vintage optical lens as a metaphorical device and a sensorial amplifier. I explored urban sensoriality and how the migrant psyche plays a part in the city experience. This work marked the beginning of my reflection on how the displaced body enables migrants to break down barriers of thought and experience through art. These experiences led me to the question: How can urban architectural and material culture recognition help develop a sense of community and belonging? How can we learn from the urban environment to enhance our lives as private and communal beings? Photography allowed me to uncover, challenge, and reimagine my connection to my new urban environment. Through this process, I began to recognize how art bridges individual experiences and collective narratives and how it could turn urban spaces into a canvas for expression and a collaborator in shaping meaning.

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<sup>8</sup> The collaborative process and virtual exhibition, developed amid a global health crisis, was born from a pressing need to respond to the physical and emotional constraints we were collectively facing. *Confined Bodies* became a blueprint for understanding the intersections of art, crisis, and collaboration, setting the foundation for deeper academic inquiry.

<sup>9</sup> Web page: <http://elsyzavarce.com/dream-walking/>

### *Migrancy, Belongings, and Sense of Place*

Positioning myself as a migrant<sup>10</sup> is significant because the questions of belonging, community, and place arise from the feelings of displacement and lack of belonging. I see myself as part of a global, timeless issue of belonging, identities, and territories. Migration challenged the notion of fixed identities and stable places; a perspective echoed in Thomas Nail's reflections. Thomas Nail is a prominent philosopher and theorist specializing in political philosophy and migration studies; in *The Figure of the Migrant* (2015) argued that the migrant is not an outlier but a central figure in shaping political and social life, as mobility and displacement form the foundation of human history.

Reflecting on my origins and identity, I have found that Montreal exposed me to diverse migrants, enabling me to find connections and learn about other cultures and perspectives. Migration and identity are an essential part of my positionality. Without planning, my world changed because of the migration, or in my case, exile. I immersed myself as a sociologist, and Professor Iain Chambers<sup>11</sup> (2008) defines it as “An impossible homecoming.” The author also argued that identity is fiction and formed on the move: “Such a journey is open and incomplete; it involves a continual

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<sup>10</sup> For this dissertation, I am adopting a simplified writing approach to ensure clarity and consistency when referring to my personal migration experience. I use the term "migration" as a unifying concept to describe both my emigration from Venezuela and my immigration to Canada, avoiding the need to specify the directional context ("emigrant" or "immigrant") each time. This choice is practical: using "emigrant" requires specifying the place of departure (Venezuela), and using "immigrant" necessitates identifying the destination (Canada). Such repetitive elaborations could interrupt the narrative flow and detract from the broader reflections on migration as a multidimensional process. By employing "migration" in this fluid way, I can address the overarching themes of displacement, belonging, and adaptation without being confined to the binary of emigration and immigration. This approach aligns with the interdisciplinary nature of my research, which seeks to explore migration as both a personal and collective experience.

<sup>11</sup> Chambers' theories focus on the cultural dimension of displacements and how displacements reshape notions of identity and spaces.

fabulation, an invention, a construction, in which there is no fixed identity or final destination.”

(p.25). As I find myself on this journey, my conceptual inquiry and making meaning of the place and the community are part of the global phenomenon of migration and displacement.

Migration shapes societies today by contributing to cultural diversity, economic development, and social transformation. According to the International Organization for Migration [IOM] (2024), in 2023, there were an estimated 281 million international migrants globally, representing about 3.6% of the world population. The factors driving migration are multifaceted, including economic opportunities, environmental changes, familial reunifications, and socio-economical-political conflicts, like in my case. Moreover, most migrants gravitate towards urban areas, intensifying challenges in city planning and socio-cultural integrations while offering opportunities for vibrant cultural exchange and economic innovation.

Nail (2015) stated that migration is not a disruptive phenomenon of contemporary life but a constitutive core, inviting us to reconceptualize notions of belonging and citizenship and to rethink belonging as a dynamic, ongoing process rather than a fixed state. This insight deepened my understanding of migration as both a personal journey and a global phenomenon, urging me to embrace the fluidity of identity and community.

My expectations with this PhD were to invite more people to learn and enjoy this “uncanny displacement and ambiguity ” (Chambers, 2008, p.6). I have made a path through ABAR working in

SEA. In that journey, I learned that mending ourselves and building communities is one step to repairing the world.<sup>12</sup>

### ***The Place: Griffintown and the Horse Palace Land.***

In this section, I describe the site of my research, and some academic studies related to the subject: Griffintown, my new home after my move to Canada, and a special place in the neighbourhood: the former Horse Palace site.

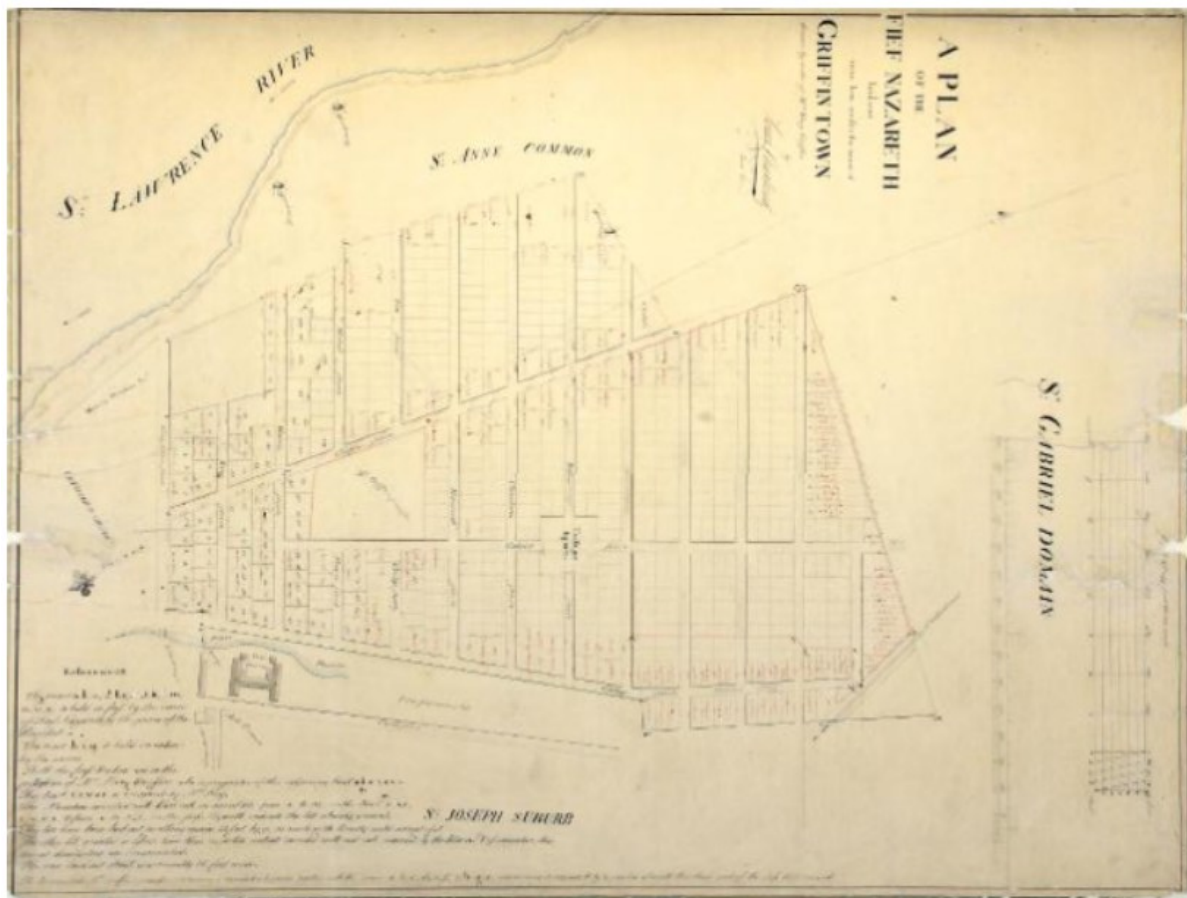
Situated southwest of downtown Montreal, Griffintown is a historic neighbourhood with roots tracing back to the 19th century. Initially a bustling industrial district, it served as a home for Irish immigrants seeking employment in that era's burgeoning factories and industries. Griffintown is a richly historical area that fosters many waves of immigrants looking for a better place to live. It is a fast-growing, multi-ethnic area affected by significant real estate projects. Within Griffintown, my neighbourhood still has a group of repurposed industrial buildings like the new City Gas and some abandoned land, such as the former horse stable and carriage house named the Horse Palace. Like other spaces, this land ignited my imagination; from my early days in the neighbourhood, I thought about the potentiality and how it could be integrated into innovative SEA activities to spark creativity and connect with the community.

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<sup>12</sup> Thanks to what I learned during my PhD research, I have developed a project called Remiendos, where I explore the possibilities of mending as an art form and a process of personal and collective healing. I have a website to share the workshops and exhibitions related: <https://elsyzavarce.wixsite.com/remiendos>

Griffintown is an area of Montreal located within the borough of Le Sud-Ouest. The place derived its name from Mary Griffin, who in 1804 asked a surveyor to subdivide the former Nazareth Fief (see Fig. 1) (Mc Cord Museum, 2022). It is located north of the Lachine Canal, delimited by Notre Dame Street to the north, the Bonaventure Expressway to the east, and St Gabriel Locks to the west. It is considered the first *Faubourg* or suburb of Old Montreal.

**Figure 2**  
*Plan of Nazareth Fief.*



Plan of the Fief Nazareth Laid Out into Lots under the Name of Griffin Town Drawn by Order of Mrs Mary Griffin. Surveyor Louis Charland (1772-1813). Source: McCord Museum. <https://collections.musee-mccord-stewart.ca/en/objects/262743/a-plan-of-the-fief-nazareth-laid-out-into-lots-nder-the-nam>

The area was populated primarily by Irish immigrants from 1820-1960. Later, urban developments like the construction of Montreal Central Station (1940), the closure to commercial traffic of the Lachine Canal (1959), and the construction of the Bonaventure expressway (1965) made the area almost a ghost town during the 70s (Janssen, 2009; Barlow, 2009; Furdui, 2019)

Due to Expo 67 preparations and modernist urban vision planning, Montreal's urban fabric underwent a significant transformation. Many historic buildings were demolished and replaced, often with parking lots. At the end of the 1980s, some of the last factories closed, like the Darling Brothers Foundry, where the Fonderie Darling Cultural Center is located (Furdui, 2019).<sup>13</sup>

Initially settled mostly by Irish immigrants in the early 1800s, it was a close-knit community where generations of immigrants built lives amidst industrial and working-class conditions. However, the neighbourhood started to change significantly in the 1960s and 1970s, with the demolition of homes for the Bonaventure Expressway displacing many families.

Matthew Barlow is a historian and author whose work primarily focuses on the intersections of identity, memory, and urban history. His book *Griffintown: Identity and Memory in an Irish Diaspora Neighbourhood* (2017) examines the history of Griffintown, a once predominantly Irish neighbourhood in Montreal. He and Scott MacLeod have collaborated on projects exploring the history of Griffintown, Irish and French-Canadian heritage. MacLeod, a filmmaker and art educator, created projects like *The Death and Life of Griffintown: 21 Stories*, which features walking tours of historic sites such as the New City Gas, the Horse Palace, and the former Dow Brewery. Their work

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<sup>13</sup> More info, Griffintown, past and present: [https://griffintown.wordpress.com/the\\_growing\\_community/](https://griffintown.wordpress.com/the_growing_community/)

blends storytelling, archival research, and visual media to bring Griffintown's past to life. Their series of videos and narratives provided me with a rich exploration of Griffintown's cultural and historical significance.<sup>14</sup>

Another valuable book for understanding the Irish community and the neighbourhood's transformation of Griffintown was *20th Century Griffintown in Pictures: Book One & Two* (2002) by Montreal-based filmmaker and author Richard Burman. A two-part book offers a visual journey through Griffintown's evolution during the 20th century. It features a curated collection of photographs that capture the area's daily life, architecture, and community spirit. I used it as a source of inspiration for my series of digital collages of Griffintown in August 2023 (see Figure 38) and to immerse themselves in the spirit of the Irish 19th—20th-century community, the participants in the urban mapping and during the final exhibition.

At the beginning of the millennium, the area was the site of several warehouses and parking lots. A significant transformation was announced in 2012 when the municipality made the new urban plan public. The new urban plan allowed the development of high-rise residential buildings, an opportunity many developers immediately seized. The historical area began its transformations. Those living in Montreal are taken by surprise. (A summary of the chronology can be seen in Table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Griffintown in dates*

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<sup>14</sup> An article on Matthew Barlow's research and publication: <https://thenewcanadianhistory.com/2017/01/23/staging-an-imagined-ireland/>

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
1642	Foundation of Ville Marie
1654	Fief of Nazareth. The first colonial name was given to the area. Granted to Jean Mance in 1664. Served as pastoral land of Soeur de D'hôtel -Dieu. (Mc Cord Museum)
1701	The French concluded a peace agreement with the Five Nations Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Great Peace of Montreal in 1701 (Jaenen & McIntosh, 2019)
1717	Fortification of Ville Marie.
1721	Faubourg Sainte Anne.
1791	Judge Thomas Mc Cord acquired de Fief. Later, his associate illegally sold the land to Mary Griffin. Mc Cord will acquire his land later.
1841	First factory of manufacture En 1845, le quartier Sainte-Anne comprend l'ancien faubourg des Récollets, le terrain du Petit Séminaire ainsi que le fief de Nazareth et une partie de Pointe- Sainte-Charles. (source Furdui)
1892	Faubourg Sainte Anne is the First quartier industrial de la ville. 1888 Darling Brother Limited
1920	Gare CN built four main lines and a small passenger train station along Rue De La Gauchetière Ouest in the Ville-Marie neighbourhood.
1929-22	The last stand of Irish-Catholic Griffintown (Barlow, 2017, p.83)
1967	1963-1964 Fonderie Darling is one of the twenty foundries of Montreal, producing bumps, elevators, machines, and other pieces for industry. 1967 Montreal Expo 67. Autoroute Bonaventure
1945-75	The Death of Griffintown (Barlow, 2017, p.105)
1970	The Lachine Canal is closed.
1989	Darling Brother Ltd. closed operations.
1990	Lachine Canal is open for pleasure navigation. Quartier Éphémère, created and directed by Caroline Andrieux, moved into the Foundry Darlings brothers building complex in 1990.
2002	Fonderie Darling, supported by the Quartier Éphémère Foundation, opened as a Cultural Center.
2012	New plan for the area of Griffintown in October 2012.

The table includes dates for Fonderie Darling and Horse Palace: table EZ Source Furdui (2019) and the Mc Cord Museum. The poster (graphic version) is in the appendices A. Figure 44

### *Some Background of Art Interventions*

Historically an industrial area, Griffintown has seen substantial redevelopment in recent years, replacing old factories and warehouses with modern condominiums, office spaces, and commercial establishments. This change has been exciting and challenging for me and my family. While the new developments bring modern amenities and a vibrant atmosphere, they also raise questions about the preservation of Griffintown's identity and the inclusivity of these new spaces. This journey has deeply influenced my research and artistic practice, driving me to explore how to foster a sense of belonging and community amid such rapid change.

Efforts have been especially critical in the face of rapid urban development. Since the early 2000s, shifts in urban zoning policies have dramatically altered the landscape of Griffintown, transforming it into a site of intense debate and negotiation over the future of its built environment and social fabric. Some groups and initiatives, such as the Quartier Éphémère, Griffintown's Community for Sustainable Redevelopment (CSR), Save Griffintown, and others, worked in the past to rebirth the area by saving its historical heritage. Since the beginning of this century, significant changes in urban zoning have made the area a “contested territory,” as Janssen (2009, p.19) described it. Where conflicting interests—from developers' visions of modernity and profitability to community groups' desires for preservation and inclusivity—collide.

Local projects such as the *Ottawa Cultural Corridor* and others promoted by groups like *Panique au Faubourg* in 1997, artists Caroline Andrieux, founder and director of the Fonderie Darling, the Horse Palace Foundation and more recently MR-63 (Roy, 2010; Ville de Montreal 2021) are still going on to maintain Montreal's culture and heritage in the area. However, a new population

lives in the area, with no attachments or meaningful connection to the site and no sense of community.

Caroline Andrieux, the visionary founder of Montreal Darling Foundry / Fonderie Darling, and a group of professionals, artists, and volunteers have made a significant cultural impact. The Fonderie Darling aims to spread its activities by engaging the community with innovative cultural and pedagogical activities, such as its new public space in the Rue Ottawa called Place du Sable-Gris, the mediation studio and its interest in reaching out to the community (Plohman, 2000; Janssen, 2019; Fonderie Darling, 2024).

Scholars have increasingly focused on deindustrialized spaces as rich contexts for examining themes such as memory, identity, social justice, and urban transformation. These areas often serve as pivotal sites for exploring deindustrialization's cultural, social, and environmental impacts and the possibilities for reimagining and repurposing them to meet contemporary needs. One prominent example is the work of Concordia University professor, curator, and interdisciplinary researcher Shaunna Janssen. In her 2009 master's thesis, *Reclaiming the Darling Foundry: From Post-Industrial Landscape to Quartier Éphémère*, Janssen highlights Griffintown's social and architectural significance. She examines how the adaptive reuse of spaces like the Fonderie Darling contributes to the city's cultural landscape and place-making, offering new opportunities for creative and community-centred engagement.

This work underscores the role of contemporary art in shaping cultural imaginaries and revitalizing historically rich urban areas. While this work has informed my understanding of the place and the critical examination of the city's gentrification through art interventions, my research differs in that it looks at the future and the urban pedagogy for people living there.

Christian Roy, a Montreal-based independent scholar and art critic, proposed the creation of a cultural corridor along Ottawa Street in Griffintown in 2010. This initiative aimed to revitalize the area by transforming it into a vibrant cultural hub, leveraging its rich industrial heritage and architectural significance. The vision also included unique transportation options, such as a calèche taxi or shuttle, to enhance accessibility along the corridor. Roy's plan for the Griffintown Cultural Corridor aimed to transform the neighbourhood into a thriving cultural destination, fostering community engagement and preserving its unique historical character. (Roy, 2010)<sup>15</sup>

*Sounding Griffintown: A Listening Guide of a Montreal Neighborhood* is an immersive audio project Concordia University graduate Lisa Gasior developed as part of her thesis work. It offers listeners a unique auditory journey through Griffintown. The guide comprises nine audio tracks, each varying in length from under a minute to ten minutes. These tracks are designed to be experienced sequentially, leading participants through the streets of Griffintown. Each segment of the audio walk integrates ambient sounds of the neighbourhood with interviews from former residents who share personal stories and reflections about their experiences growing up in Griffintown. These narratives provide intimate insights into the community's past, including anecdotes about local landmarks like the Dow Brewery and the Griffintown Girls and Boys Club. The project also touches on historical events, such as the 1944 plane crash on Shannon Street and the tale of Mary Gallagher, whose ghost is said to haunt the area. (Gasior, 2007; Wallace, 2023)<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> [https://fonderiedarling.org/en/Toponymie-boite-a-outils?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://fonderiedarling.org/en/Toponymie-boite-a-outils?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>16</sup> Sounding Griffintown A Listening Guide of Montreal Neighbourhood:  
<http://www.griffinsound.ca/griffintown/index.htm>

Sometime before I moved to the area, Nuit Blanche (2008- 2011 approx.) at New City Gas was a key highlight of Montreal's annual Nuit Blanche, which is part of the citywide Montréal en Lumière festival. Nuit Blanche, or "White Night," celebrated art, culture, and nightlife, featuring free or low-cost activities and performances across the city, running from evening to dawn. New City Gas's historic architecture, as a former 19th-century gas plant, offered a unique backdrop for Nuit Blanche, blending industrial heritage with contemporary cultural expression. This mix resonated with Montreal's ethos of celebrating the old and the new. These events were organized by Corridor Culture, an initiative led by Harvey Lev<sup>17</sup> and Judith Bauer, artists and activists from Griffintown, who created memorable activism, resistance, and inspiration during those years.<sup>18 19</sup>

One memorable, inspirational and significant installation during Nuit Blanche 2011 was Claude Desjardins's "Les Soldates de la Paix" (The Soldiers of Peace) at New City Gas as part of an event that showcased socially engaged art in a historical and industrial setting. The installation featured hundreds of her clay figurines, each representing a commitment to peace, arranged in a contemplative and powerful formation. The choice of New City Gas, with the high-ceiling industrial architecture, contrasted the delicate, symbolic figures and added a layer of reflection on transformation, resilience, and community action.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> I talk more about Harvey Lev in chapter 5

<sup>18</sup> Nuit Blanche Griffintown New City Gas | Montreal, Quebec | 2009: <https://www.lindaswansonstudio.com/grotto>

<sup>19</sup> Nuit Blanche 2011 program: <https://griffintown.org/corridorculture/gdc/2011/>  
<https://www.griffintown.org/corridorculture/nuitblanche/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://griffintown.org/corridorculture/>



Claude Desjardins's "Les Soldates de la Paix". Photo: Bevilacqua, 2022

In her Ph.D. thesis, Shaunna Janssen (2014) used Griffintown as a case study for critiquing the ethics and politics of urban development. For the thesis, *Urban Occupations Urbaines: Curating the Post-industrial Landscape*, Janssen used curatorial practice as a method and worked with critical site-specific and socially engaged art interventions. This interdisciplinary research is grounded in posthumanism and a feminist framework, theories of place, community, public space, and cultural heritage to discuss urban discourse and produce cultural pedagogy.

As part of Janssen's (2014) project, Alison Reiko Loader, a Canadian interdisciplinary artist and scholar, presented in her Master graduate project (Non-thesis) *The Anamorphic Cinema*, a unique blend of artistic exploration and historical investigation of the 1987 Griffintown's murder of Mary Gallagher, culminating in *Ghosts in the Machine: The Inquest of Mary Gallagher*, a looping fifteen-minute, site-specific video installation in New city gas.

From another perspective, Mira Baba's doctoral dissertation (2019) examined the case of Point Saint Charles, another emblematic neighbourhood of Montreal's post-industrial area undergoing rapid gentrification. It concludes by highlighting the importance of considering

assemblage as the primary tool to understand and reconsider the contested nature of interstitial spaces like the ones in Pointe Saint Charles. It also demonstrated the possibilities of interstitial spaces as resourceful opportunities to empower the community creatively and with innovative ways to manage it.<sup>21</sup>

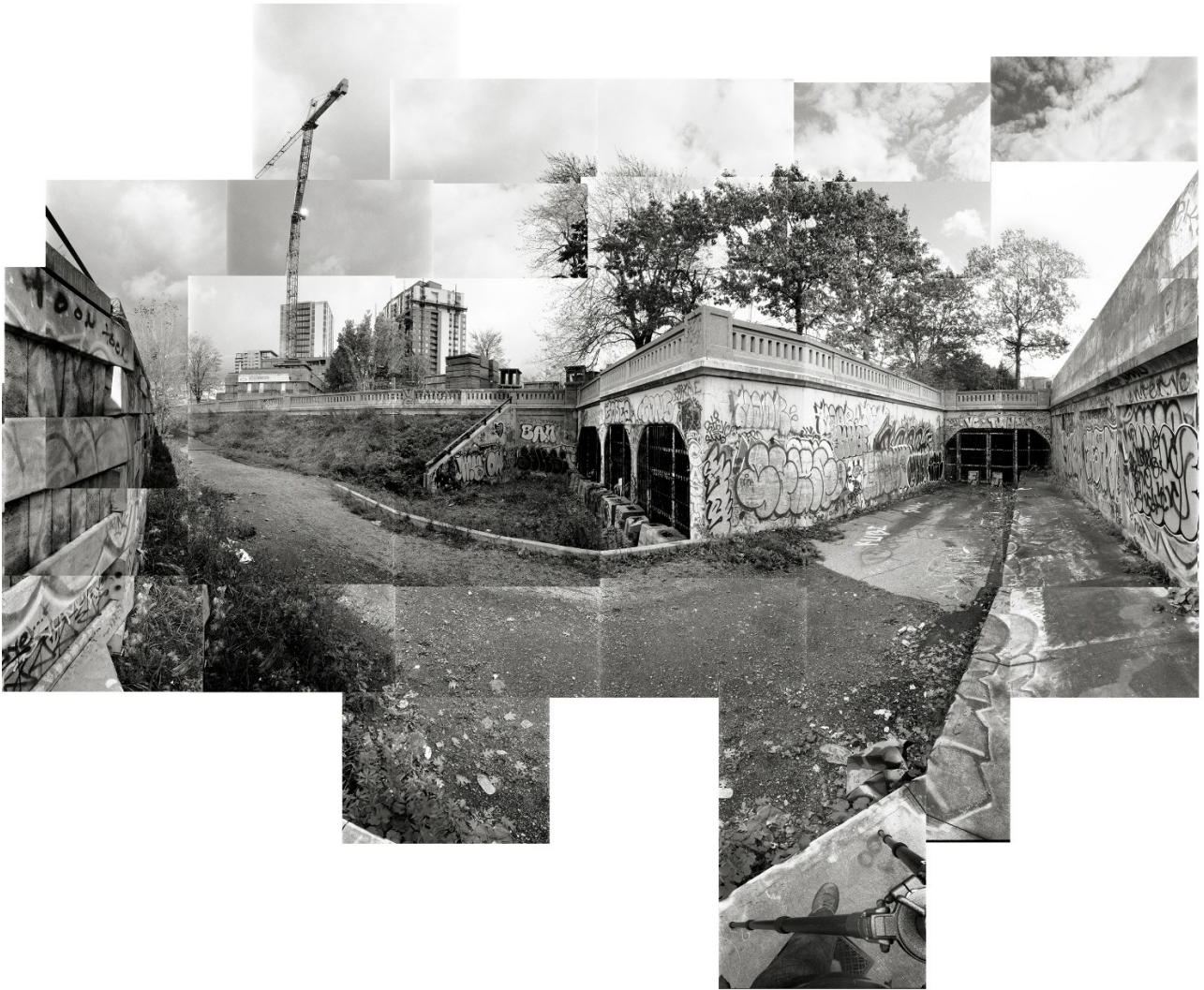
Joanna Donehower's doctoral dissertation (2021) developed the concept of *Curicité* to inform place-informed urban performance research in another post-industrial Montreal neighbourhood, Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. These theses have informed me about conceptual ideas for understanding the place, such as interstitial spaces in the city (Baba, 2019). I pictured the interstitial spaces of Griffintown and the possibility of reimagining those spaces. Donehower (2021) used *Curicité* as a gesture of resistance to the capitalist transformation of the urban environment.

Some artists, like Dani Hausmann, capture the intersection of decay and resilience within urban landscapes with their evocative photographs taken in abandoned industrial buildings in Griffintown and Point Saint Charles (the south neighbourhood of Griffintown). The rich texture and atmosphere got my attention from the first moment I saw the pictures at the HPG gallery at Rue Ottawa and made me reflect on the layered histories of Griffintown. Hausmann's work not only documents a moment of urban change but also invites viewers to reflect on themes of memory, place, and the evolving identity of community spaces.

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<sup>21</sup> The doctoral dissertation of Mira Baba (2019) examined the case of Point Saint Charles, another emblematic neighborhood of Montreal, a post-industrial area undergoing rapid gentrification. The thesis entitled *The Point (e) of the Interstices: "Tensions between Community and Capitalist Appropriation over Interstitial Spaces"* draws from ethnographic fieldwork, using walking as a method, in-depth interviews, content analysis, building in concepts as *assemblage* the right to the city, production of space and interstitial spaces.

**Figure 3**  
*Dani Hausmann artwork*



Hausmann's photographs serve as a poignant visual entry point into the broader discourse on the role of art in interpreting and reimagining urban environments. The collage picture's view is from near the corner of Wellington and Murray Street, Wellington Tunnel, and we see under the once-project Square Gallery and the repurposed public bathroom building. (McLeod, 2017))

Source Dani Hausmann (2020), file provided by the artist.)

Despite the profound transformations brought by deindustrialization and urban redevelopment, echoes of this solidarity remained for a few years before I arrived in the area. Community-driven initiatives, such as the local advocacy for preserving historical sites and cultural heritage, which I mentioned, highlighted the neighbourhood's enduring commitment to collective

identity and mutual support. Events and spaces that fostered connections—like public art installations, workshops, and cultural gatherings—served as modern extensions of this communal spirit that once happened in the neighbourhood with the Irish community.<sup>22</sup>

As I have described, artists and researchers are often drawn to post-industrial spaces for their raw, unrefined aesthetics, rich and complex layers of meaning and history, and opportunities for creative reinvention. These spaces, marked by the material and historical production traces, serve as fertile ground for artistic exploration and experimentation. Such engagement reflects artists' adaptability, vision, and agency, underscoring the arts' broader role in reimagining and transforming urban spaces into meaningful sites of community connection and cultural renewal.

These researchers, initiatives, and interventions prompted me to reflect on how envisioning alternative futures through SEA interventions can be a meaningful and responsive act of fostering community building, place-making, and resistance in the face of the voracity of urban changes.

### ***Horse Palace***

The Griffintown neighbourhood in Montreal has a rich history of horse-drawn carriage (calèche) operations, with notable stables that have served the industry for over a century. While the Griffintown Horse Palace is the most renowned, other stables have existed since the 1860s, supporting the city's calèche industry. These stables played a crucial role in housing horses that

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<sup>22</sup> Discover Montreal's Lost Neighborhood of Griffintown: <https://activehistory.ca/blog/2013/04/16/discover-montreals-lost-neighborhood-of-griffintown/>

navigated the streets of Old Montreal, contributing to the city's charm and tourism appeal. However, detailed historical records of these other stables are limited.

Established around 1862, the Griffintown Horse Palace on Ottawa Street is one of Montreal's oldest stables. It has been a significant part of the city's equestrian heritage, housing horses for various functions, including hauling construction materials and pulling tourist-driven calèches through Old Montreal. For three decades, the stables were managed by Leo Leonard, a former iceman and calèche driver known locally as "Clawhammer Jack." Leonard retired in 2011, and the future of the stables became uncertain due to the sale of the surrounding land. In 2017, the original stable structure was deemed too decrepit to save and was demolished. However, advocates, including the Horse Palace Foundation, intend to rebuild the stable to preserve its historical significance. (Roy, 2010; Furdui, 2019)

As of January 1, 2020, Montreal banned horse-drawn carriage tours, citing concerns over animal welfare and incidents involving horses. This decision marked the end of a long-standing tradition in the city and impacted the operations of stables that supported the calèche industry.<sup>23</sup>

The original wooden stable structure of the Horse Palace is now demolished, leaving behind an open green space now surrounded by new condominiums in Griffintown. A new population, unfamiliar with the site's history and heritage, now resides there. The Irish community tried to save the old stable structure and turned it into a museum. Local activists and academics initiated the Horse

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<sup>23</sup> Montreal's horse-drawn carriage industry rides off into history, but not quietly:  
[https://northeastnow.com/2019/12/29/montreals-horse-drawn-carriage-industry-rides-off-into-history-but-not-quietly/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://northeastnow.com/2019/12/29/montreals-horse-drawn-carriage-industry-rides-off-into-history-but-not-quietly/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

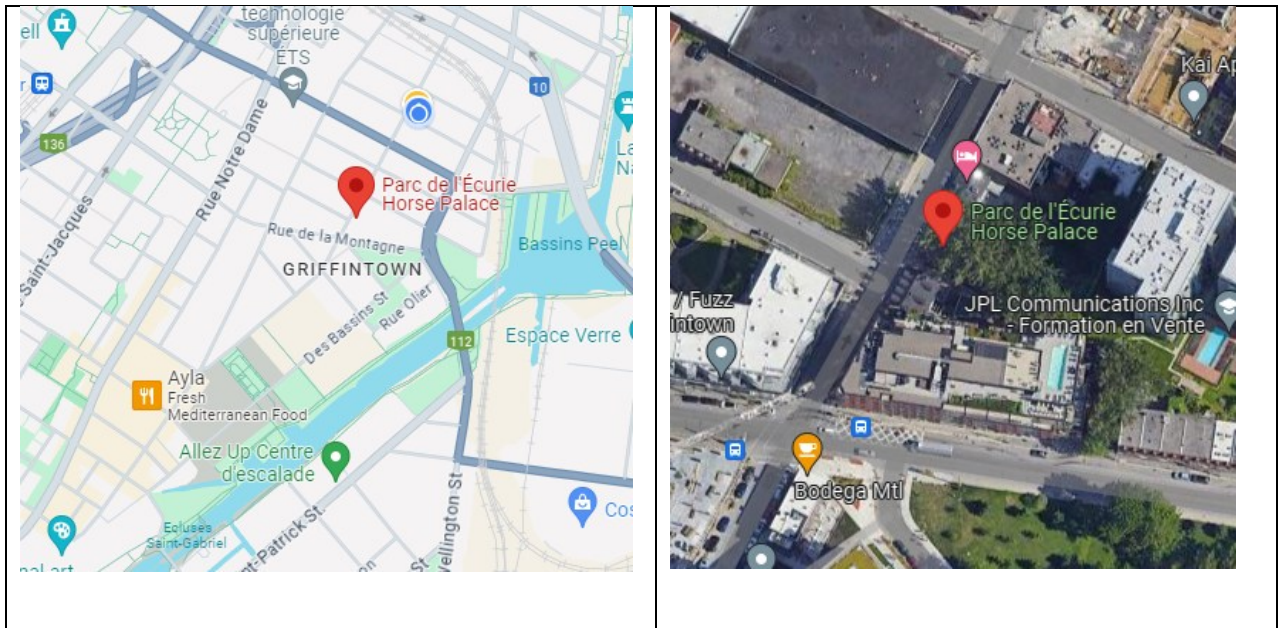
Palace Foundation for this matter. The initiative failed, and the land remained empty and forgotten (Sérvigny, 2009). Fortunately, in 2023, landscape architect Juliette Patterson, president of the Horse Palace Foundation, along with Mr-63 and other groups, organized community day activities on the land. Meeting Patterson, a passionate person about the Horse Palace heritage and an activist for integrating nature into cities, was a great pleasure, as was learning about her vision of better futures for the land.<sup>24 25</sup>

After relocating to the neighbourhood and discovering the Horse Palace, I became deeply interested in its history and significance. The geospatial features of the location added to its allure, initially concealed from plain view by surrounding buildings, yet unveiling a beautiful tree at the center and lush green grass. I began photographing the changes throughout the year, transforming this small plot into a source of inspiration. This space has catalyzed my Ph.D. research, transforming it into a wellspring of artistic inspiration and a canvas for envisioning potential community engagement.

**Figure 4**  
*Horse Palace location.*

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<sup>24</sup> See [https://archive.org/details/tcftv1qc-Juliette\\_Patterson\\_Fondation\\_du\\_Horse\\_Palace\\_de\\_Griffintown\\_Foundation\\_Griffintown\\_Horse\\_Palace\\_chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpegclefindmkaj/https://www.griffintown.org/horsepalace/docs/Brochure-FR.pdf](https://archive.org/details/tcftv1qc-Juliette_Patterson_Fondation_du_Horse_Palace_de_Griffintown_Foundation_Griffintown_Horse_Palace_chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpegclefindmkaj/https://www.griffintown.org/horsepalace/docs/Brochure-FR.pdf)  
<sup>25</sup> <https://montrealgazette.com/news/montreal/heritage-lovers-hope-to-renew-iconic-horse-palace>



Source: Google Earth 2024

**Figure 5**  
*Horse Palace Land.*





Images Source: E. Z.

### ***Griffintown a Contested Area<sup>26</sup>***

At the beginning of the 21st century, Developers and city planners saw the area’s deindustrialized state—its empty warehouses, proximity to downtown Montreal, and potential for “urban renewal”—as an opportunity. Introducing condos, high-end retail spaces, and restaurants signalled a shift designed to attract affluent, younger urban professionals. This layering of events and social-economic and synchronic forces made Griffintown a de-industrialized space with a history of human struggle, resilience, and eventual abandonment.

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<sup>26</sup> It refers to “contested territory” Janssen (2009)

“Griffintown, Nooo! That is not a residential area.” This was the reaction of a friend living in Montreal when I told him in 2015 that my family would live there. Moreover, this question has raised controversy. So, what is this?

Since the new plan for Griffintown was announced in October 2012 and adopted in 2013, the historical post-industrial neighbourhood has undergone significant urban change. (Montréal-Ville, 2021). The dramatic change in Griffintown surprised the citizens of Montreal. The press documented the strong reaction, such as in the 2015 Montreal Gazette article “Griffintown rising: The transformation of a storied Montreal district,” where the rapid change was seen more as a missed “opportunity to create a world-class community” (Friede, July 15, 2015, para 1).

Former residents and heritage advocates criticized the lack of public consultation and expressed concern that the transformation disregards the neighbourhood's cultural and social history.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the voices were not heard. Since 2013, Griffintown has undergone intense urban redevelopment. Developers transformed it into a hub of condominiums and modern amenities. While this revitalization has introduced economic activity, it has also erased much of the area's historical character, sparking debates about the loss of heritage and community identity.

Could we talk about Gentrification?

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<sup>27</sup> [https://www.mcgilldaily.com/2008/04/architects\\_line\\_up\\_against\\_griffintown\\_project/](https://www.mcgilldaily.com/2008/04/architects_line_up_against_griffintown_project/)

In the article "The Gentrification of Griffintown," Ierfino-Adornato (2017) explored the transformation of Montreal's Griffintown neighbourhood from a historic working-class district to a hub of upscale condos and modern developments.

Geographers and researchers, Mark Davison and Loretta Lees argued that "'Gentrification' is perhaps the most politically loaded word in urban geography"(Davison & Less, 2005, p. 1187). In their book, they argue that it became almost a dirty word, resulting in some cases substituting it for "urban renaissance." However, as the authors are critical of the consequences of gentrification, they propose to open the term to new forms of gentrification, such as new-build gentrification.

The authors added that New-build gentrification refers to a specific form of gentrification where, instead of renovating existing structures, new developments and construction projects are the catalysts for changes in a neighbourhood (Davidson & Less, 2005). This often involves the demolition of older, lower-income housing and the construction of new, usually more upscale, residential or commercial buildings. New-build gentrification can lead to shifts in the socio-economic makeup of a neighbourhood, often resulting in increased property values, rents, and a change in the demographic composition of residents.

Griffintown in Montreal has undergone radical changes, and new-build gentrification is a notable aspect. As a result, since my family moved to Griffintown, we have witnessed rapid changes in the site in the last ten years, from a neglected neighbourhood to a crowded, densified condo development. Griffintown felt like a ghost town to me in April 2010. However, by the summer of 2014, I saw the proliferation of sales offices on every block, showcasing enticing interior designs, architectural models, and development plans. My family decided to settle in the area in 2015, and since then, the rapid changes have effectively erased many traces of the former Irish community.

Initially, the move was for my kids, who were new to Canada and had recently graduated from high school. The area's proximity to universities was a crucial factor in our decision. I knew it would help them navigate the physical and emotional challenges of adapting to Canada's harsh winters. Its charm lay in its proximity to the Old Port, the bustling commercial hub of downtown, and the fascinating layers of history embedded in the neighbourhood.

Only a few industrial buildings persist, isolated and disconnected from the ongoing urban transformation. The intensification of densification raises questions about the traditional relationships needed for community development, introducing an element of unpredictability and undefined outcomes. I asked how the distinctiveness of the area and the unpredictability of its social outcomes can become integral factors in shaping SEA interventions.

The scholarly work, art installations, activism, and the unique character of the place inspire me to embrace resilience. Some protagonists of Griffintown's intense days at the beginning of the decade until around 2012 expressed nostalgia, viewing the outcome as a lost opportunity for the neighbourhood. As Harvey Lev (2015) noted, the fight had been lost. However, as I once said in Maracaibo, when I actively engaged in saving my neighbourhood, "It is never too late." I envisioned myself as a Socially Engaged Art (SEA) curator and educator in Griffintown. My role would be to help bridge the tensions between preservation and progress, cultivating a sense of community and place that honours the past while fostering a shared vision for the future.

In the next chapter, I will examine the theories and methodologies contributing to my research proposal in Griffintown, Montreal, from 2022 to 2025.

## **Figure 6**

*Composite of my urban wandering in Griffintown pictures.*



In order of the sequence of the pictures: Rue Ottawa during the years-long renovation; Rue Peel renovation 2020; New City gas Nadia Myre artwork; Fonderie Darling from Boulevard Robert Bourassa before the construction of the Odea Building. I view that is already gone. (Source EZ, 2020, 2022).

## II



*Uncanny Paths*, E. Zaarce 2022

## CHAPTER II | FOUNDATIONS AND SCAFFOLDING

### *Introduction*

In this chapter, I establish the foundational pillars of my theoretical framework and outline the methodological structure by delving into key topics that form the crux of my inquiry. These serve as the bedrock for both my theoretical framework and the scaffolding of the methodology. Beginning with exploring key concepts such as imaging and "sense of place," I go through their multifaceted dimensions and significance. Moving on to the dynamics of community and its intrinsic values, I extend my inquiry beyond the exploration of place. Investigating sensory aspects and the embodied urban experience, I examine how urban encounters are shaped by sensoriality, influencing our interactions with the built environment.

Turning to Socially Engaged Art (SEA) qualities, I scrutinize the characteristics of Socially Engaged Artworks (SEA) and their potential impact on community dynamics. Within Socially Engaged Art, I explore various community engagement and interaction strategies.

Venturing into Futures Studies, I query its essence and potential role in shaping community perspectives. Examining how Future Studies can be harnessed to serve and benefit the community, I consider its implications for foresight and transformative futures. Recognizing its framework as a critical and imaginative thinking tool, I explore how it empowers communities to envision alternative pathways. Finally, in exploring new pedagogies and the built environment, I investigate their intersections and collective impact on community development.

Together, these inquiries form the foundation upon which my theoretical framework and methodological scaffolding rest, guiding the exploration of how innovative Socially Engaged Art

practices contribute to the sense of community. By addressing these critical topics, I establish a robust theoretical foundation and methodological framework to guide my exploration of how innovative Socially Engaged Art practices contribute to fostering a sense of community in the rapidly changing context of Griffintown, Montreal, my neighbourhood.

### ***Key Concepts***

In this section of my theoretical framework, I introduce some essential definitions, such as imaging, sense of place, and sense of community, as well as critical authors on socially engaged art, Futures Studies, and built environment and education. I examine the artwork's socially engaged Art (SEA) qualities, presenting authors such as Claire Bishop, Pablo Helguera, Alexis Franz, and Holly Sidford. I discuss their arguments about SEA and, in addition, discuss the strategies of engagement by citing some examples of SEA artists that I feel are most related to my proposed interventions. I will continue by introducing the field of Futures Studies. I conclude with reflections on Pedagogy: Built Environment, Futures Studies, and Education.

### ***Imaging***

“Imaging” refers to the process of creating images or visual representations. In this thesis, I use “imaging” broadly to refer to mental processes or creative expression that align more closely with “imagination.” When discussing mental processes or creative endeavours, “imaging” would involve the generation or formation of mental images, much like what is encompassed by the broader concept of “imagination” (Merriam-Webster, 2023).

Gaston Bachelard wrote extensively on the philosophy of imagination and the poetics of space. His work, “The Poetics of Space”(2010), delves into how our imaginations are connected to

our perceptions of space and place. I used Bachelard's ideas extensively to introduce my students to a sensitive and non-functionalist approach to space. His work has inspired my art practice and reflected my interest in the meaning of place.

Canadian Philosopher Alan R. White (1990) argued in his book *The Language of Imagination* that Imagery lacks the essential features of imagination (p.237) and added: "...imagery does not express anything, whereas imagination does..." White, well known for practicing linguistic analysis, argued about image discourse by broadening the understanding of imagination beyond sensory imagery and highlighting mental processes' active, expressive nature. This broader perspective suggests that imaging involves a spectrum of cognitive activities, not solely restricted to the creation of sensory images:

The difference between having imagery and imagining explains why we do not, despite what philosophers say, usually talk simply of 'imagining X,' but of 'imagining that X is Y,' 'imagining what or when or where X is,' 'imagining X Ving', 'imagining X as Y,' 'imagining X in certain circumstances. To have an image of X is not necessarily to imagine anything. (p. 237)

The statement primarily addresses the complexity of imagination and the need for qualifiers and context when discussing imaginative thoughts. My following discussion about Futures Studies typically involves exploring potential futures, scenarios, and trends. Imagining future scenarios involves considering various conditions, actions, and contextual elements, much like the nuanced view of imagination presented in the statement.

### ***What is the Sense of Place?***

Regarding what a sense of place is, Steven Feld and Keith Basso, American anthropologists, contributed to the definition of this term in their book *Senses of Place* (1996). Both authors were deeply interested in how places and spaces are perceived. In this sense, the authors claimed that social well-being is attached to the sense of rootedness in place. They state, “the relation of sensation to emplacement; the experiential and expressive way place know, imagined, yearn for, held, remembered, voiced, lived, contested, and struggled over; and the multiples ways place are metonymically and metaphorically tied to identities” (p.11).

Christian Norberg-Schulz believed that the built environment plays a significant role in shaping our sense of place. Norberg-Schulz, a Norwegian architect and architectural theorist, believed that a sense of place is a fundamental aspect of human experience. In his book *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1980), Norberg-Schulz theorized about how a place is not simply a collection of individual properties but a "total" phenomenon (p.8) that cannot be reduced to any one aspect. According to Norberg-Schulz, a sense of place arises from various elements such as physical surroundings, historical and cultural context, and personal experiences. These elements create a unique atmosphere or mood specific to a particular location. This atmosphere, or "genius loci," as Norberg-Schulz calls it, is not simply a sum of its parts but a holistic experience more significant than the sum of its individual components. Overall, Norberg-Schulz's understanding of place emphasizes the importance of considering the totality of an environment rather than focusing solely on individual properties or features.

A historic architecture preservation researcher, Jeremy Wells, conducted an exciting study asking: How are old places different from new places? The study compares historic Charleston and l'On, a “new” place designated on new urban principles. It showed how residents are highly attached to both, but historic Charleston exhibits stronger rootedness. Exploring the 'age value' in their experiences, Wells (2017) investigated the fact that preserving masonry patina in historic places is crucial for fostering attachment. The findings highlight the importance of balancing a community's subjective experiences with experts' objective historical values in understanding a sense of place.

Yi-Fu Tuan, a Chinese-born American geographer and writer, considered in the books *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977) and *Romantic Geography: In Search of the Sublime Landscape* (2014): “...in the city, one can experience the heights and the depths—in a word, the sublime” (p.113). He works on the experiential aspects of space and place and contributes to discussions on how individuals embody and make sense of urban spaces. Similarly, throughout their master’s thesis about the genealogy of “place,” Yeliz Ozmetin (2008) considered “place” as a mediation between humans and the earth. The author claimed:

Within all these considerations, mediating with the environs by defining, listening, and interpreting the given also necessitates the incorporation of another term; “dialogue.” While the importance of listening to “the murmur of the site” has been explored so far, it is also important to note that placemaking as the very human endeavour necessitates engagement in the “social” and maybe “psychological” context.” (p. 141)

Mauro Gil-Fournier, Spanish architect, researcher and professor, discussed in his article “Urbanismo Afectivo: una aproximación trans a la ciudad” (2024): “(...) if cities are machines of urbanization, extending their heterogeneous networks beyond their territories, we need to address the movement of affects so that urbanism becomes a tool for coexistence on an already wounded planet” (p.41). The author proposes an approach to urbanism that contrasts the functionalist and technical planning far from the site and the subjective experience by asking us to turn to the affective. The author claimed that for *Trans Affective Urbanism*, it means creating something that permeates everything from the personal to the collective, allowing a love of urban biodiversity, so planning catalyzes life. Fournier proposes affects as a trans approach to the city, as a path for coexistence in an already wounded planet. Inspired by the author, I proposed the second intervention, urban mapping, prompting participants to map affects as acts of resistance.

By taking a holistic approach to the built environment, I asked how a sense of community contributes to the sense of place—or vice versa. How can I contribute to the discussion to create SEA interventions that are meaningful and impactful for the people who participate?

### ***What is the Sense of Community?***

The word "community" has its roots in Latin. It comes from the Latin word "communitas," which is derived from "communis," meaning "common" or "shared." Community emphasizes the idea of people coming together and sharing something in common. (Merriam-Webster, 2023). This Latin origin is evident in the evolution of the word across different languages; in French, the word for community is "communauté," and in Spanish, the word is "Comunidad." The linguistic

connections between these languages reflect the historical interconnectedness of cultures and the enduring significance of communities in Western societies.

“Community” refers to people who share common interests, values, or characteristics and are connected by social, cultural, economic, or geographical ties. It can exist on various scales, from a local neighbourhood to a global network, and plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging and support among its members. A community may be territorial (i.e., determined by a specific geographic space), organizational (i.e., a structured entity), or Interest-based (i.e., defined by a shared goal, such as preservation of a language) (TCPS-2, 2014).

From a sociological perspective, Phil Bartle, a lifelong facilitator, mobilizer, animator, or activist to move a community, claimed: “A community is a social institution, part of culture, and consists of the ideas and behaviour of human beings. For it to develop and become stronger, it must be done in the context of human beings which constitute the community” (2008, p. 121).

After the impact of globalization, ‘community’ seemed to be a romanticized idea, a declining aspect in the retreat into private lives in the urban cities of the post-industrial era. However, from a cultural sociology approach, Gerard Delanty, in his notable book *Community* (2009), explored the concept of community in contemporary society. The author discussed how, in recent years, a shift towards social movements and new conceptions of space has led to a renaissance of urban sociology.

In this context, new forms of categorization arise from a perspective of globalization and cultural diversity. Professor Paul James's leading research group proposed a typification of communities following the first criteria: “Grounded community relations; second, Lifestyle community relations community; and third, Projected community relations” (2012, p.20).

From a psychological perspective David McMillan, defined the sense of community as: "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (McMillan in McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p.9). McMillan and Chavis revisited McMillan's theory in their article, "Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory" (1986), which proposed a comprehensive theoretical framework that outlined the elements contributing to the sense of community and was very influential in psychology and sociology. The widely used measurement instrument called the "Sense of Community Index" (SCI), identifies four elements of a sense of community: membership, influence, meeting needs, and a shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Their work has been extensively used in practical implications for community development initiatives. They reasoned that understanding and fostering a sense of community can contribute to the success of community-based programs, social interventions, and initiatives to improve overall well-being. The authors also highlighted the importance of social connections and belonging in promoting mental health and overall life satisfaction. The concept of a sense of community is not limited to physical neighbourhoods but extends to various settings such as online communities, workplaces, and educational institutions.

When you migrate, you often realize how much you took for granted in your previous life—especially the sense of community. Living most of my life in one city, Maracaibo, I had deep ties to various communities for most of my life. It was in Griffintown, with its constant transformation, that I truly understood how essential community is—not just as a group of people living in proximity but as a source of support, culture, and identity. Without a community, individuals struggle to find meaning and belonging.

In Griffintown, the ongoing changes created tension between the displaced cultural fabric and the emerging transient population. I tried to develop connections and social bonds, but it was challenging in a neighborhood with few community resources—no library, community center, or school nearby. It felt like a space without the foundational pillars that foster a sense of belonging. Fonderie Darling played an important role as a pivotal venue for my three interventions. It helped me to foster connections and create spaces where people could unite, share experiences, and strengthen the social fabric.

### ***Sensoriality and Embody Urban Experience.***

I delved into sensorial experiences, urban atmosphere characterization, architectural recognition, and historical awareness in the first and second interventions. I recognized the influence of my architectural background and the learning through seminal key authors such as Kevin Lynch, Juhani Pallasmaa, Gaston Bachelard, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

The influential American urban planner Kevin Lynch in *The Image of the City* (1964) provided a framework for the embodied experience of navigating urban space. Some seminal concepts like *place attachment* and *identity*, *navigability and wayfinding*, and *community and social interaction* explored in this thesis are supported by Lynch's work. The author emphasizes the importance of individuals forming mental maps and creating a coherent image of their city. This includes nodes, landmarks, paths, edges, and districts. Also, Lynch explores how people navigate and find their way in the city and how recognizable landmarks and well-defined paths contribute to a sense of legibility. Although Lynch's work primarily focuses on individual perceptions, it sets the

stage for understanding how shared images and experiences can contribute to a collective urban identity.

Kevin Lynch acknowledged John Dewey's influence in his work. It is essential to note that Dewey's book, *Art as Experience*, crossed the boundaries of disciplines and changed education. His experiential learning and aesthetics philosophy form the foundation for understanding sensorial and embodied learning. Dewey's ideas on the continuity of artistic and everyday experiences are particularly pertinent. (Dewey, 2005).

Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's book *Phenomenology of Perception*, initially published in 1945 (1975), influenced our understanding of sensoriality and embodied urban experience and encouraged us to rethink the city as a sensory, embodied, and intensely human environment.

In his work, such as *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (2011), Finnish architect and researcher Juhani Pallasmaa explored the role of senses in architecture, which can be extended to urban environments. His work is valuable for understanding how sensory experiences shape our perception of urban spaces. Earlier, I introduced Gaston Bachelard's works related to imaging. However, his works also argue about the phenomenological exploration of the poetic dimensions of living space, which informs discussions on the sensorial experiences of individuals within urban environments. (Bachelard, 2010)

Edward T. Hall, an American anthropologist, discusses his research on proxemics and spatial communication in his seminal work *The Hidden Dimension* (1966). This theory contributed to the discussions about using space in urban environments and how it influences social interactions. For

my research, Hall's exploration of how human cultures relate to space and territory in meaningful ways is a source of deep reflection.

### ***What are the Social Engaged Art (SEA) Qualities of the Artworks?***

Tate London (2022) describes Socially Engaged Practice or socially engaged art as “any art form which involves people and communities in debate, collaboration, or social interaction” (paras.1). Claire Bishop, a British art historian and well-known critic, declared that she prefers to avoid the term socially engaged because of its ambiguity; instead, she chooses participatory art. In this sense, for Bishop, the quality of SEA is the interaction with people: “a definition of participation in which people constitute the central artistic, medium, and material, in the manner of theatre and performance” (2012b, p.2).

Pablo Helguera, an artist, educator, and author of several books like *Education for Socially Engaged Art* (2011), points out the importance of social interaction in SEA, a quality that makes it a hybrid practice, multidisciplinary, something between art and social work: “SEA depends on actual-not imagined or hypothetical-social action” (p.8). Helguera distinguishes two art practices: symbolic and actual. The author claimed that SEA goes beyond the representational, the allegorical, the metaphorical, or the symbolic level. Even if the artworks are politically or socially motivated, they must operate in social situations strategically or instrumentally to achieve a result. Thus, SEA falls in actual practice rather than symbolic practice.

On the institutional page of Tate London (2022, para.1), Social Engaged Practice or Socially Engaged Art (SEA) is an umbrella term that includes categories like New genre public art coined by Lacy in 1991 and Activist art, offering Bruguera Tatlin’s *Whisper #5* performance presented in the

gallery in 2008, as examples for both terms. The terms social practice and activism are related to the work of Rick Lowe and his Project Row Houses, an ongoing community development through engagement, art, and action that started in 1993 (PRH, 2022). The New genre of public art examples includes Mark Dion's and Chicago Urban Ecology Action Group (CUEAG), a long-term experimental field study group in cooperation with the community that started in 1992 (Afterall, 2022).

**Figure 7**  
*Project Row Houses, by Rick Lowe (1993-)*



Project Row Houses, founded by artist Rick Lowe in Houston, Texas, is a visionary community-based art initiative. It transforms historic shotgun-style houses into spaces for art, cultural preservation, and social

engagement, fostering creativity and empowerment within the local community. Houston, USA. Source E. Zavarce, 2024.

This social interaction of SEA can vary depending on different circumstances and the artist's intentions. Alexis Frasz and Holly Sidford, prominent cultural policy and art advocates, provided a framework for understanding the SEA ecosystem in their report *Mapping the Landscape of Socially Engaged Artistic Practice* (2017). The authors proposed an instrumental taxonomy, categorized from the following variables of SEA: **Aesthetics** Role: Social / Fine Arts; **Role - the function of the artist**: Facilitator / Creative agent; **Origin of the artist**: Rooted in / From outside; **Definition of the "work"**: Process / Product orient; **Direction of influence**: Inward / Outward; **Origination of the work**: Community generated / Outside generated; **Place**: Place specific / Non-place specific; **Issue**: Single issue / Multi-issue; **Duration**: Short term / Long term (Frasz & Sidford, 2017, p.7). From this, I started my analysis of the cases and understanding SEA's possibilities.

With this classification, Frasz and Sifford (2017) offered a structured framework to understand how art intersects with various community, cultural, and policy aspects. The authors also provided examples of the nine practice variations illustrating their taxonomy, from social to fine aesthetics, like Kara Walker's public art piece, *A Sublety* (2014). The artist's role could be a facilitator or a creative agent, like the Eve Mosher *High Water Line* project (2007), which brought the climate change discussion into the community. The authors added that some SEA projects are a process, like Marty Pottenger's *Thin Blue Lines* (2007-2015), working with the police department to write poetry or being more traditional with a final art product. Some SEA projects serve the community directly; in these cases, the direction of influence is inward; others aim to influence public opinion (outwards), like raising awareness of a critical situation like the *Tibetan Freedom Concert* about the Tibetan people. The work can be produced within the community, emphasizing

social networks (Jordan, 2013), such as the examples of Dion and Lowe, or outside the community, such as Bruguera's performance. Finally, regarding the issue, it could be a single problem to be addressed or a multi-issue program, and the duration could be a one-time project or a commitment that encompasses a couple of years. As an example of this, they offered Thenmozhi Soundararajan's project focused on sexual violence in India, which has been ongoing since 2015 and worked through #Dalitwomenfight.

Nato Thompson, director and curator of *Creative Time*, discussed that SEA is a form, not a content: "When put in light of larger forces outside of the art world, art used for social purposes can be utilized for a variety of ethical prescriptions. It is merely a tool" (Coombs & Thompson, 2015, p. 66). This author comments on the conceptualization of SEA in terms of justice, equity, and power and how it must challenge: "combine that reading of aesthetics with a drive to social justice (that is to a revolutionary desire to up-end the dominant order of power and produce more horizontal equity), then we have an equation for thinking through socially engaged art" (p. 66). In the book *Socially Engaged Contemporary Art: Tactical and Strategic* (2011), Thompson maintained the *tactics* and *strategies* of SEA, describing different approaches in terms of temporary, interventionist forms and long-term creative works.

Shannon Jackson, professor and researcher in performance studies, explores the complex dynamics at play in SEA in her book *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (2008). She discusses how these practices navigate the tension between different critical polarizations as: "1) social celebration versus social antagonism; 2) legibility versus illegibility; 3) radical functionality versus radical un-functionality; 4) artistic heteronomy versus artistic autonomy" (p. 139). The author recognized social practices as a hybrid form and acknowledged the risk of heteronomous engagement

and how the conjunction of differences can lead to form and transformation. Also, the author noted that art and humans are not self-governing: “An awareness of that interdependency can yield both innovative forms and an innovative social politics” (p. 149). This concept directly relates to my research, which explored how socially engaged art (SEA) fosters active community participation and transforms urban experiences. By understanding the interdependent nature of art and society, my work aimed to demonstrate how collaborative art practices can inspire imagination, foster belonging, and cultivate community resilience and resistance. It also prompted me to consider how to characterize the intervention I was planning, ensuring it embraced these interdependent dynamics to maximize its impact on the community.

### ***What are SEA Strategies of Engagement?***

Bishop, in the book *Participation* (2006), discussed the importance of the *social* dimension of participation in SEA. For the author, this is what makes for SEA, and not just the activation of the individual viewer, like in ‘interactive’ art and installation. In this sense, Bishop (2012a, b), Helguera (2011), Frasz and Sidford (2017), and other authors agree that the characteristic of this practice is the participation of the people as the medium. However, this participation could have different intentions and multiple variations. The strategies could range from being not explicit and without any agreement with the participant, as the word engagement may suggest, to a range of forms of participation. Artist-artwork and participants are in a relationship of continuous “play of mutual tension, recognition, and dependency” (Bishop, 2012a, p.41).

In this sense, Helguera (2011) proposed a multilayer participatory social engagement, proposing a tentative taxonomy, which starts from passive participation to more active involvement to co-creation participation: Nominal participation, directed participation, creative participation, and

collaborative participation. Helguera added: “nominal and directed participation takes place in a single encounter, while creative and collaborative participation tends to develop over longer periods (from a single day to months or years)” (p.15). Like in Lowe’s and Dion’s examples, audience participation is collaborative. In both cases, participants have shared the responsibilities of taking on the project for months and years, as in Lowe’s case.

In the report “Beyond attendance: A multi-modal understanding of arts participation” (2011), researchers of the social role of the arts Jennifer Novak-Leonard, Alan S. Brown, and Wolf Brown discussed a multi-modal taxonomy of audience involvement and how SEA activities will differ in the participants' level of creativity and control, from being an active collaborator to being an artist—*curatorial, interpretative, and inventive*. This made me reflect on the educator, mediator, and artist's role in characterizing my SEA interventions.

Helguera (2011), in addition to the degrees of participation, discusses the predisposition toward the involvement of the individuals. In this sense, he distinguished three groups: *voluntary*, those who are actively and willing to engage; the *non-voluntary*, who are somehow coerced; and finally, *involuntary*, those who encounter a project or a situation without knowing that it is an art project. This is what French philosopher Guy Debord <sup>28</sup>(2006) called “constructed situations,” which is a method he used as “experimental behaviour to break the spectacular bind of capitalism” (p. 96).

Generally, work executed in communities is related to SEA. However, the relationship between SEA artists and the community varies, from voluntary participation (as a community-

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<sup>28</sup> The theory of the *dérive* (or 'the drift') was first published in *Les Lèvres Nues* #9 on November 1956

building mechanism creating human connections) to paid participation. For instance, Spanish artist Santiago Sierra hires participants as a conceptual strategy to exploit the individual and denounce exploitation (Helguera, 2011).

Frasz and Sidford (2017) considered that SEA skills are artistic and social and that social skills are needed for engaging with individuals and communities. In this sense, Helguera (2011) points out that artists may learn from social work research methods and procedures to engage with communities, but their work goes beyond a social service; artists encompass a broader view. It has to do with an intention that deals with a statement, to say something else, or to draw a more significant trajectory.

In the case of Dion's and Lowe's examples, their approaches to the community are similar, favouring dialogue, negotiation, and collaboration. They must develop social skills to achieve their goals. "Learning how to moderate a conversation, negotiate among interests in a group, or assess the complexities of a given social situation does not curtail artistic liberty; these skills can be used to support our activities" (Helguera, 2011, p. XV).

On the other hand, Bruguera's performances use the tactic of confrontation and antagonism. The audience finds themselves in a stressful, involuntary situation in her performances. The performance's strategy depends on the spectators' participation, which will determine how the action will unfold. The artist's actions seem to be socio-political experiments on becoming citizens. In a way, the effects of the actions on the audience may be confusing now, but the experience will undoubtedly generate a reflection. These tactics follow the tradition of SEA artists like Hans Haacke, Andrea Fraser, and others taking critical positions, raising questions about the institution, structures

of power, etc. Like Santiago Sierra, some SEA artists are recognized for their antagonism and provocative work (Helguera, 2011).

Helguera (2011) argued that SEA falls in the tradition of conceptualism about process art but contrasts it with the political activist art of the 70s, arguing that SEA usually has an agenda that goes beyond the strategically orchestrated social interaction: “becoming a platform or a network for the participation of others, so that the effects of the project may outlast its ephemeral presentation” (p. 12).

Regarding engagement strategies, an essential reflection of SEA is usually related to the public realm but not limited to it. SEA is related to the concept of ‘in the interest of publicness,’ as educational theorist and philosopher Gert Biesta (2014) argued in his discussion of public pedagogy. This means SEA is not just about doing something in public spaces or with the public but is more about actions that allow the growth of freedom and plurality in acts with others. Biesta (2014) relies on the philosophy of Hanna Arendt and her concepts about the public realm and the human condition. For Arendt (1958), *action* and *plurality* are the modes of life that must act in the public sphere, not in isolation, according to freedom and with a continuous restart. Biesta (2014) presented three categories: *For the public*, *of the public*, *in the interest of publicness*. The first two terms could be related to the traditional educational system, which tends to reduce plurality. He proposed a third form, *in the interest of publicness*, which he described as the one that works: “toward pluralization and thus toward the promotion of the very conditions under which action is possible, and freedom can appear” (p.24).

Then again, Helguera (2011) argued that social interaction must be a dialogic process, offering participants open, rich, and critical experiences. In this same sense, Nicolas Bourriaud

(1998) had earlier introduced the idea of art as an opportunity for relational spaces and human interaction. Hence, SEA generates these relational gestures, working from the artist's singularity toward the openings of plurality spaces.

Among the various SEA practices, I relate to Mark Dion's and the Chicago Urban Ecology Action Group (CUEAG) for my first two interventions, as described in the methodology section. In cooperation with the community, the long-term experimental field study group started in 1992 (Afterall, 2022) as an example of SEA artist-led pedagogy. Dion's approach is an exciting example of how to reach the community, favouring dialogue, negotiation, and collaboration. I realized what Helguera (2011) pointed out: artists must develop social skills to achieve their goals as SE artists.

Instead, my last example of SEA engagement strategies is Anna Hickey-Moody and Mia Harrison's, in their essay "Affective Pedagogy" (2018). The authors explained their experience examining through SEA the possibilities of dialogue and affective encounters between community members with significant cultural and religious levels of diversity in Auburn, a suburb of Sydney, Australia. Their SEA practices ranged from interviews, community surveys, focus groups, workshops for kids, and discussions with parents about religious beliefs. The families shared their experiences and engaged in the interfaith art project, materializing: "community belongings in new ways that were sensitive to affective tropes of cultures outside their own" (para. 20).

In this section, I have discussed some SEA qualities and engagement strategies. I started pondering the possibilities of SEA, which vary depending on circumstances and the artist's intentions, as mapped by Frasz and Sidford (2017), but it always emphasizes actual social action over symbolic representation. The authors I discussed shaped my approach to conceptualizing my three SEA interventions by valuing the social dimension of participation, as Bishop (2006) noted;

community involvement argued by Helguera (2011); the fostering of freedom and plurality discussed by Biesta (2014), and the need of human interaction claimed by Bourriaud, (1998). Furthermore, learning from Jackson (2008), considering SEA's hybrid nature, balancing social celebration and antagonism, functionality and autonomy, and recognizing the interdependency of art and society. Moreover, understanding aspects of social competencies in SEA goals helped me balance artistic needs and social skills to engage communities effectively (Helguera, 2011).

Thompson (2015) views SEA as a tool for social purposes, focusing on justice, equity, and power, advocating for aesthetics combined with social justice to challenge dominant power structures. Also, the importance of SEA often focuses on public engagement, with a need for open, critical dialogues. Examples included Mark Dion's community projects and Anna Hickey-Moody and Mia Harrison's interfaith art project in Sydney, fostering dialogue and cultural sensitivity. These concepts supported my research on how SEA can foster a sense of community and transform urban experiences, emphasizing imagination, belonging, and resilience.

### ***Futures Studies***

For the third intervention, I invited participants to think about how to develop a sense of community and place and to imagine the future of the Horse Palace site. I worked with the Futures Studies framework to discuss the results of the intervention process. In this section, I introduce the Futures Studies field and some key authors like Wendell Bell, a pioneer in the field and his Participatory Futures Praxis approach; Jim Dator and his Foresight future theory; and Sohail Inayatullah, who has made the Futures Studies theories accessible to multiple audiences.

### **What is Futures Studies?**

Wendell Bell, a futurist and Professor of Sociology at Yale University, in his book *The Foundations of Futures Studies*, stated: “Futures Studies is a global, inclusive, and multi-cultural field, and futurists constitute a diverse, worldwide community of scholars, scientists, students, and teachers” (1996, p. xvii). The author characterized the field as: “(...) futures studies is its problem-solving approach. It aims to be practical, to be of use in the real world. People and organizations can use it to help them navigate through” (p. xxxiii). The author affirmed that this involves systematic and explicit thinking about alternative futures. Futures in plural because there is more than one future that can be envisioned or desired.

Bell (1996, p. xxix) also affirmed: “Modern Futures Studies is a continuation of the age-old human quest to understand the nature of the good life and to find the correct values and norms of conduct that will lead to the flourishing of human society.” Professor and researcher on technology Janna Anderson (n.d.)<sup>29</sup> argued that “The roots of futures thinking – the imaging in human minds of the future – can be traced back to the beginnings of human societies” (para. 1). Going back to early times the author mentioned Plato’s *The Republic* as a first example of thinking about the future: “advanced civilizations tended to project their thinking and utilize basic methods of planning and foresight. The Greek philosopher Plato developed the concept of an ideal society with perfect justice in *The Republic*, and his vision inspired millions of thinkers to imagine the future” (para.1).

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<sup>29</sup> Anna Anderson wrote a detailed chronological revision about the origin of the studies and timeline of Futures Studies for the Elon University: [chrome extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclcfndmkaj/https://elondcn.blob.core.windows.net/eu3/sites/964/201](https://elondcn.blob.core.windows.net/eu3/sites/964/201)

By the 1970s, several courses on Future Studies were taught in different universities in the USA. These pioneers were James A. Dator and Alvin Toffler. Some international conferences, like the Paris World Futures Studies in 1973, were held. Furthermore, non-profit research and educational organizations were founded to aid individuals working on creating new futures (Anderson, n.d.).

Bell (1996) discussed Participatory Futures Praxis, a category to designate methods used by futurists involved in activism and practical actions, like social activism and participation and Future Workshops initiated by Robert Jungk in the early 1960s, who worked directly with communities to empower people. Robert Jungk, an explorer of the future and grassroots activist, developed a methodology to promote participation and shared visions of the future, focusing on four key themes: democratizing the future; controlling science, technology and power; commitment to justice and humane life forms; and creativity and art as seismograph of the upcoming (Jungk bibliothek, 2024, np).

In an interview with Dr. Stuart Candy, a professional futurist and experienced designer, Abhinav Chugh (2021) affirmed: “The field has broadened into an exploration of alternative futures and deepened to investigate the worldviews and mythologies that underlie our collective prospects” (para.1). The author explained some of his projects, research, and experiments promoting communities’ foresight for better futures, like *The Thing from the Future*, an award-winning imagination game. His book *Design and Futures* (2019) compiled a series of articles on Futures Studies and design scholars and practitioners, contributing to the “emerging hybrid design/futures practices” (p.3).

### ***How can Futures Studies serve the community?***

The exhibition, “The Great Imagination. Histories from the Future” at Espacio Telefonica Madrid (2021- 2022) is an excellent example of how Futures Studies may serve the community. Jorge Camacho, the curator of the exhibition, proposed to the public a reflection on the future: “The aim is to understand how and why the future was thought of in the past, to find out how these ideas continue to condition us when it comes to imagining it and to rethink how we can venture new horizons from the present moment” (Fundación Telefónica, 2022, para.1). The curatorial text ends with these words: “What alternative futures can we imagine in response to the challenges we are facing? Unleashing the transformative power of the imagination to think ‘radically different’ worlds is perhaps more necessary now than ever” (para. 3). Camacho, who is also an expert in Futures Studies, developed the concept of the exhibition, and the museography influenced by the futures categorization of Jim Dator and his theories.

Jim Dator claimed that we must envision a better future and argued that the future could not be predicted. Still, we can forecast alternative futures: “The future’ cannot be ‘predicted,’ but ‘preferred futures’ can and should be envisioned, invented, implemented, continuously evaluated, revised, and re-envisioned” (Dator, 2009, p. 4). He promoted the consideration of many futures, facilitating the dialogue among groups with conflicting visions. He called generic “alternative futures”: Future One: Continued Growth; Future Two: Collapse; Future Three: Discipline; Future

Four: Transformation. The last one, *Transformational Society*, proposes that fundamental changes occur (Dator, 2022, 2005).<sup>30</sup>

Sohail Inayatullah, a former student of Jim Dator and a researcher and professor at the Graduate Institute of Futures Studies at Tamkang University in Taipei, explained how Dator had “the ability to enhance the capacity to create alternative and preferred futures, to move from the being fixed in space-time, to becoming” (p.9). Dator inspired him to dedicate his life to the field, making his life more prosperous and better: “As is the world we live in and co-create” (Inayatullah, 2013, p. 9). The author has taken the Futures Studies further, developing a methodology and a discourse accessible to multiple audiences, from corporate to academia to TED talks. He explained how Futures Studies “has moved from focusing on the external objective world to a layered approach wherein how one sees the world actually shapes the future one sees” (2012, para.2). The author characterized “The identification of alternative futures [as] thus a fluid dance of structure (the weights of history) and agency (the capacity to influence the world and create desired futures)” (2013, p.38).

In his article “Futures Studies: Theories and Methods” (2012, para. 4), Inayatullah explained the four frameworks of his approach to foresight and understanding futures studies: The first is predictive, the second is interpretive, the third is critical, and the fourth approach is participatory action learning/research. The latter approach serves the community in diverse ways: “This approach

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<sup>30</sup> “Smart’s Four Futures (adapted from Dator 1979), Four Futures slightly different titles and definitions, as follows: 1. Continuation (further status quo growth and change, e.g., ‘business as usual’) 2. Limits and Discipline (behaviors to adapt to growing internal or environmental limits) 3. Decline and Collapse (system degradation or failure modes as crises emerge) 4. Transformation (new technology, business, or social factors that disruptively change the system)” (Foresightuniversity, 2024, np.) Further info: <https://foresightguide.com/dator-four-futures/>

is far more democratic and focuses on stakeholders developing their future, based on their assumptions of the future (for example, if the future is linear or cyclical) and what is critical to them” (Inayatullah 2007, in Inayatullah, 2012, para. 4). Futures Studies can help communities forecast a *transformative future*, helping them design and define alternative futures.

In the book *Seven Complex Lessons in Education for the Future* (2002), Edgar Morin challenged educators and argued that we must teach to live and confront uncertainty. He elaborated on confronting uncertainties. The author states that educators should teach strategic principles for dealing with chance, the unexpected and the uncertain: “We should learn to navigate on a sea of uncertainties, sailing in and around islands of certainty.” (Morin, 2002, p.3). In this sense, Future Studies presents approaches, methods, and possibilities to serve the artists, educators, and community.

As an artist, educator, and researcher, I developed three interventions showing how artists can work with communities to enhance urban experiences, build a sense of community, and foresee a transformative future. Futures Studies theories inspired me to think about co-creation, imagination, participation, pluralization, and alternative scenarios.

### ***New pedagogies, Futures Studies, and Built environment.***

This section will delve into my reflections and experiences related to pedagogy, the built environment, Futures Studies, and education. By examining these interconnected themes, I hope to offer a comprehensive understanding of how art and education can collaboratively shape the future of urban communities, fostering a sense of belonging and resilience in the face of rapid development. In

this section, I will proceed with reflections and experiences on Pedagogy: Built environment, Future Studies, and education.

I aim to contribute to developing new pedagogies that are responsive to the challenges and opportunities presented by urban transformation. The insights gained from Griffintown's redevelopment provide an impetus for exploring how educational practices with SEA can evolve to support community and equity. Additionally, integrating Futures Studies into this framework allows for a forward-looking perspective.

Pablo Helguera (2011) has criticized traditional pedagogy and claimed that it failed in three things: the creative performativity, the collective construction of an art milieu, as a collective construction of knowledge: “(...) and third, the fact that knowledge of art does not end in knowing the artwork but is a tool for understanding the world” (p. 80). The author argued in favour of re-envisioning art education from art and its unique patterns of performativity, experience, and exploration of ambiguity.

The futurist Inayatullah (2003) said that his pedagogical approach is based “on teaching **about** the future (data, trends, litany, for example) and teaching **for** the future (civilizational challenges, the necessity to decolonize the future) as well teaching **in** the future (living the future one prefers, as well as possible).” (para. 2) The author explained that his framework comprises empirical, interpretive, critical, and action research approaches. He has also pointed out the importance of having the *right conversation* (Inayatullah, 2012, 2013b). The ‘right’ conversation is dialogical, where complex ideas and emotions can be explored, shared, and questioned. It transcends language and cultural barriers, engaging viewers in dialogue that challenges perceptions, provokes thought,

and fosters understanding. As argued by Irit Rogoff (2008, 2013), a professor, writer, curator, and cultural theorist, art has become the site of these conversations. Her contributions to this thesis offer new insights into the transformative potential of artistic practices in shaping our understanding of the world. Rogoff's perspective helped me contextualize my interventions as more than just artistic endeavors; they are acts of resilience that challenge existing structures and enable new ways of understanding belonging and community within a rapidly changing urban landscape.

I deeply connected with artist and art educator Paul Langdon's (1996) objectives; his doctoral thesis on the Built environment curriculum aimed: "(...) to capture the excitement and potential that the built environment offers as a pervasive agent for understanding and celebrating our constructed past, present, and future." (p. iv). Langdon argued about the importance of phenomenology of the place by looking at the well-known architectural theories of authors like Christian Norberg-Schulz, the cultural and anthropological studies of Amos Rappaport, and the urban views of Kevin Lynch, among others. Although the author defended his thesis in 1996, most of his ideas and reflections are still valuable. This quote is one of my favourites that reflects his passion and values for his proposed curriculum: "(...) this curriculum plan is based on a belief in the democratic rights of all members of society to have a voice in maintaining a just, egalitarian and compassionate society that cares for its weaker and future members and promotes species and ecological survival" (Langdon, 1996, p. 170).

In the article "Principles of Possibility: Considerations for a 21 Century Art and Culture Curriculum" (2007), Olivia Gude proposed a concept I found fascinating for my research: *Attentive living*. She proposes: "Attuning students to vitally experiencing everyday life should be a goal of

any systematic art education” (p.337) and explains how this *Attentive Living* could take many forms, including areas of nature, design, household, crafts, and built environments curriculums.

Gude (2004) proposed Psychogeographical journeyings and Psychoaesthetic explorations in particular sites as strategies for recognizing and stimulating awareness of the importance of the qualities of the spaces that surround us. The author takes on Debord’s Situationist Theories (2006), the two practices of *dérive* and *détournement*. The first refers to a way to experiment and experience the urban environment. It is like an awakening of the sensitivity of our social relations and how the spaces shape them. The second practice refers to strategies of appropriating urban elements to create something new with different intentions: humorous, critical, etc. The author described experiences like the Community-based Street mural movement to propose Community-based public art as a way of helping the student’s active participation in improving the built environment.

In this context, Langdon (1996) and Gude (2007) point out that an essential aim of built environment education is to develop an understanding of agency, which is a critical notion in what Edward Soja (2009) has called City and Spatial justice. Empowering the community with SEA and learning experiences will strengthen the social fabric by promoting a sense of city ownership, responsibility, and shared purpose among communities.

Soja (2009) has developed the concept of the city and spatial justice; in this regard, deliberations will contribute to that discussion of an institutional and spatial justice role: “As a starting point, this involves the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them (...)” (p.2). The author argued about the changes in the notions of space, from a cartographic view to one that explores the generative effects on urban agglomerations as the process of: “technological innovation, artistic creativity, economic development, social change

as well as environmental degradation, social polarization, widening income gaps, international politics, and, more specifically, the production of justice and injustice.” (Soja, 2009, p. 2). This perspective engages deeply with the historical, social, and cultural complexities of the urban environment. Similarly, Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) conceptualization of the "third space" as a site of hybridity and negotiation resonates here. Bhabha's notion underscores the "third space" as a productive zone where cultural identities are rearticulated and contested, challenging binary thinking. Together, these frameworks offer valuable insights into the fluidity and hybridity of identities, enriching the analysis of urban spaces.

Jarvis W. Ulbricht (2005), an educator and researcher, explores the intersections of art education, community engagement, and the role of art educators in fostering deeper connections between art and society. The author argues the importance of contextual learning, which focuses on understanding knowledge and experiences within specific social, cultural, and historical contexts.

Finalizing this section, Placing the Grounds of this research, I positioned myself as an architect, educator, artist, and migrant. My background in architecture and my experience as a professor have profoundly shaped my approach as a curatorial and socially engaged researcher. As an architect, I am attuned to the built environment's impact and contextual learning on community dynamics. As an educator, I recognize the importance of pedagogical frameworks in shaping how people engage with their surroundings. This dual perspective informs my exploration of new pedagogies, Futures Studies, and the intersection of the built environment with education.

In this context, I relate to the educator and researcher Emily Pringle (2009), who explores the role of artists in pedagogical settings, particularly how they “drew on experience as creative practitioners to instigate a learning process that resembled their own practice” (p. n/p). Pringle

research has significantly contributed to my understanding of how artists and educators engage in collaborative and reflective practice. This confirms my belief that my experiences enhanced through architecture and teaching can be pivotal in supporting a learning environment that fosters creative thinking and critical engagement with space. Moreover, Fiona Woods (2015), an artist and researcher, claimed an alternative space for learning, emphasizing the need for pedagogies that inspire imaginative, different, and better worlds (Inayatullah, 2013). These perspectives align with my vision of SEA as a critical practice with strong pedagogical elements, aiming to create communal experiences that envision alternative futures for the community and seek to “enlarge consciousness” (Davis et al., 2015, p. 210), awareness that transcends immediate circumstances. By integrating these ideas, I explored SEA strategies as a critical practice with pedagogical aspects to create communal experiences, envisioning alternative futures for the community and offering new ways of thinking about and engaging with the built environment.

### **Methodology: Art-Based Action Research (ABAR)**

I employed Art-Based Action Research (ABAR), a cyclical and dialogical methodology related to places or communities, to identify problems and plan solutions. This approach aligned with my experience as an architect, professor, and researcher working in communities. In summary, ABAR principles begin with a problem in the community or sites. ABAR served various purposes in art education, visual arts, and contemporary art projects: as an intervention for problem-solving,

understanding a situation, as data collection, as a collaborative research method, and as empowerment for better design of communities and environments (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018).<sup>31</sup>

Timo Jokela, Professor of Art Education at Lapland University, Finland, is the team lead researcher behind Art-Based Action Research (ABAR). The author explained how ABAR was the response to the need to further develop methods of participation and art education research according to the guidelines of sustainable development, social justice, and economic development: “Art-based action research is an approach that aims to develop the participatory methods and working approaches of artist/teacher/researchers to seek art-based solutions to identified multidisciplinary challenges in collaboration with other stakeholders in environments and communities” (Jokela et al., 2019, p. 2).

The ABAR strategy guided research progress in the aim, setting, interventions, and evaluation cycle. Through iterative cycles of investigation/design, making actions/artwork, observing/documenting, and reflecting/evaluating, ABAR fostered art and art education creative dialogues. Jokela & Huhmarniemi (2018 in Hiltunen, 2019) described ABAR cycles as starting with planning/investigation, which included setting goals and analyzing the context and sociocultural aspects of the community. Then, it proceeded with actions/making the artwork. These interventions were well-documented/observed and became research data. The cycle closed with the reflection of

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<sup>31</sup> The book *The Lure of Lapland, A Handbook for Arctic Art and Design*, which brings together the results of an innovative master’s program of the Faculty of Art and Design of Lapland University, conceived as a “program that responds to the challenges posed by the changing socio-cultural and economic circumstances in the north of Europe and Arctic.” (Coutts et al., 2018, p. 6). One of the innovative aspects is using ABAR. In the first section of the book, Jokela and Huhmarniemi (2018) defined ABAR as: “a research strategy that guides the progress of research in the cycles of action research and uses art as a catalyst for development work” (p.9).

the data analysis and incorporated the user experiences with interviews of the participants and group discussion. In brief, ABAR was a project-oriented Art-Based Action Research and included the following basic steps: 1. Preliminary work (Set the target, identify the problem, (...). 2. Teamwork: planning the organization/collaboration 3. Realization and collecting research data 4. Reflection, evaluation, and reporting.

An essential aspect of ABAR was collecting multiple reflective data. This compilation was available to develop the work and validate the research. Data collection consisted of notes, visuals, sketches, drawings, design material, the record of discussions, questionnaires, and interviews. The authors also added the importance of documenting the researcher's observations. This documentation had to be regular and systematic. Some format examples were a notebook, a file, a voice recorder, and an observation diary, which also helped recover the chronology of the research. Some materials, like photos and videos of this process, were used for the exhibition. Therefore, documentation was needed for multiple purposes: "displays, evaluation, reporting, and the planning of new projects, and not all needs could be anticipated during the project" (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018, p. 16).

Another critical aspect of ABAR was that the artistic result and the process had to be available to a diverse audience. The research was presented as a formal report and creative production and feedback: "The evaluation criteria of effectiveness included, for example, the works and research's ability to generate ideas, feelings, and mental images, as well as a sense of empowerment and increasing participants' confidence in their capabilities and skills" (Jokela 2009 in Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018 p. 16). The participatory component of ABAR made human factors an essential part of it. Therefore, ethical choices were always involved in all the stages of ABAR. In consequence, the pragmatic objectives of ABAR were always influenced by community values,

attitudes, and political views. These had to be addressed, reporting the background factors, researcher relationships, and personal intentions (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018). ABAR results were intended for audiences as “participating stakeholders or the community, the scientific community, the art world, and the general public” (p. 18) contributed to knowledge and understanding of art and art education.

Jokela et al. (2015) remarked that contemporary art's contextuality, dialogical, and process-based nature, especially in community and environment, are linked to the people, places, and everyday circumstances, encouraging engagement and communality. “Communality means a new method of examining and understanding people’s connections, spontaneous networks, and common pursuits as a counterforce to extreme individuality and consumption” (p.435); the author emphasized the importance of the art educator as an innovator of cultural values.

In this sense, ABAR is related to the fourth type of ecological research defined by Peterat et al. (2008). This fourth type is interested in “understanding human knowing, learning, and action in a particular setting” (p. 239). In this research, knowing is situated and contextualized: “Knowing is conceptualized as an activity, achieved in a context or setting by engaging in meaningful actions or practices in that environment.” (p. 239). The authors identify ABAR as case-specific and development research, following the tradition of action research. The orientation has similarities to design-based research in understanding the cycled research process with planned interventions to solve practical problems and propose a functional theory. Critical action research is also related to discussing community issues.

However, implementing the ABAR methodology by Jokela & Huhmarniemi (2018) is an interdisciplinary approach that integrates art and design to resolve local problems by integrating the

community. In this way, the community participates in the co-creation of their world. Epistemically, ABAR methodology combines aspects of art-based and design research approaches. As an influential author in my career, Donald Schön (1983) argued in his book *The Reflective Practitioner* that the reflective design process is an epistemology of practices embodied in the artistic and intuitive procedures, with situated design thinking bringing an answer to uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict.

Huhmarniemi et al. (2021) argued that the paradigm changes had changed the aims and methods employed in Art, Community Environment studies (ACE) at the University of Lapland: “The discussion is framed by a Western theoretical shift from environmental aesthetics to new materialism, post-humanism and decolonization.” (p.1). This has taken the implementation of ABAR towards “enhance actions and promote sharing and knowing with nature in a post-humanistic manner.” The new focus is the Northern knowledge system, which: “is now used to describe tactile, situated understanding and knowledge communicated in material cultures and visual symbols” (p.6).

### ***Procedure: The Three-Interventions Overall Plan***

In this section, I present the conceptualization of the three planned Art-based Socially Engaged Art interventions: the first, within a cultural institution, The Foundry Darling; the second, centred around a public space, the former Horse Palace land; and the third, a mixed Virtual and actual intervention. The Arts-Based Action Research (ABAR) methodology was employed for all three interventions, regardless of location or nature. Specific methods were delineated for each intervention. The goal of each intervention was to raise awareness of the environment, history, and heritage of the place while simultaneously fostering a sense of community and connection to the

location. The process allowed progressive refinements in understanding collective memory, citizen participation, and shared learning. I aimed to collaborate with the community to empower individuals through Socially Engaged Art (SEA).

**The first intervention was from an institution: The Fonderie Darling.** In the fall of 2022, I was awarded an Elspeth McConnell Fine Arts Internship Award. My plan for the internship was to do community outreach art projects at the Fonderie Darling. Fonderie Darling is a visual arts venue and a non-profit organization with the mandate of supporting contemporary art creation, production, and dissemination. From its foundation in 2002 at the edge of Griffintown, Fonderie Darling has been an influential leader in saving industrial and architectural heritage, supporting artists, and offering dynamic programming of cultural activities.

My first intervention was part of the proposed internship plan. As part of the public outreach programming for the Fonderie Darling in the Fall, I proposed a series of activities related to *Sharing and caring about our neighbourhood, including* a photography workshop.

**Second intervention from a public space: Rue Ottawa and the former Horse Palace land:** The making action/Artwork, Proposed Workshop: For this intervention, I invited artists, art students, and community members to engage in an urban mapping workshop activity in Rue Ottawa and the former Horse Palace.

The workshop took on the urban scenography framework and mapping. This approach allowed for a transversal understanding, utilizing situated methods to navigate the spatial politics of urban changes. The focus was on exploring Griffintown's discursive, social, material, and cultural

specificities (Janssen, 2019). The workshop and mapping activities provided a platform for collaborative exploration and documentation.

**Third Intervention: Mixed-Format, Virtual and Actual:** In this intervention, titled Disruption, participants and I envisioned alternative futures for Griffintown and Horse Palace Land while exploring ways to build community. This open art/design call invited creative ideas to reimagine the future of this historical site. Utilizing both virtual and in-person formats, the intervention engaged the community in imagining a renewed sense of belonging and place, fostering dialogue about the ownership and stewardship of such spaces. By exploring collective imaginaries, we sought to uncover valuable insights into how these shared visions could deepen understanding of the site's cultural significance and inform its potential future.

Through the third intervention, I aimed to raise awareness of Griffintown and Horse Palace Land, emphasizing their historical importance and the potential to reclaim these spaces for the community. The intervention was designed to "mobilize collective sensibilities," spark conversations, and inspire action toward a sustainable future (Cucuzzella et al., 2020, p. 11).

### ***Conceptualization of the SEA Proposed Interventions.***

In this section, I would like to share my reflections on shaping and defining my SEA interventions. I faced the challenges of limited time and financial and logistical support to make them feasible and achievable. Additionally, I confronted a conceptual dilemma related to the four critical

polarizations Jackson (2008) mentioned.<sup>32</sup> Specifically, I found myself navigating between a critical and responsive approach to social celebration and social antagonism.<sup>33</sup> (Jackson, 2008) Moreover, as a hybrid form, I knew that social practice would carry heteronomous artistic engagement, bringing uncertainty and a lack of control of things. I adopted a balanced and open approach. The question was, how do I prepare for that?

Additionally, due to my background as an architect and design professor, I was initially inclined to approach interventions with a functionalist and problem-solving mindset, focusing on tangible outcomes rather than viewing the process as an opportunity for learning and exploration. This contrasts with the approach advocated by artist, educator, and researcher Kathleen Vaughan (Vaughan, 2009; Vaughan et al., 2016), who emphasizes the importance of learning within the process itself. Recognizing this difference in perspective, I shifted my approach, integrating more open-ended, process-oriented strategies into my procedure.

In this sense, starting the first intervention with a photography workshop was a deliberate choice that allowed me to embrace a pedagogical engagement—inviting participants to aesthetic urban experiences and fostering a dialogical encounter. This aligned more closely with a process-

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<sup>32</sup> As I mentioned before, Shannon Jackson, professor and researcher in performance studies, discussed in her book *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (2008) the critical polarization between: “1) social celebration versus social antagonism; 2) legibility versus illegibility; 3) radical functionality versus radical un-functionality; 4) artistic heteronomy versus artistic autonomy” (p. 139).

<sup>33</sup> Social antagonism in Jackson's framework refers to art practices that emphasize conflict, disagreement, and the exposure of social tensions. These works often challenge dominant narratives, question societal norms, and provoke critical reflection by highlighting societal power imbalances, injustices, or contradictions.

driven methodology that prioritizes learning and collaborative exploration over purely functional outcomes.

Starting from Frasz and Sidford's (2017) SEA mapping, I proposed a collection of attributes for the three interventions, as described in Table 2. As an artist and curator, I facilitated three interventions related to my surroundings, my new place as a migrant, and my body in displacement. As an educator and researcher, I see my SEA artist-led pedagogy as a process of conceptual inquiry and making meaning with the dialogic forms of co-constructive learning with participants (Pringle, 2009, w/p).

**Table 2**  
*Selection of possible attributes of my SEA interventions*

Variables	Classification
Themes	-Urban built environment. –Communities -Urban sensorially, -Social interactions, engagement, historical awareness, communities of place -Connections, collective participation, a community of practice,
Involved communities	-Communities of locality -Personal community (artists, friends, and neighbours)
Forms of participation	-Sensorial stimuli -Transdisciplinary collaborations -Performative gestures -Creativity
Sort of participation	-Directed -Collaborative
Strategies	-Socially engaged art -Art events, workshops, exhibition -Performative gestures -Ephemeral public art installation -Site-specific art installation - Mapping
The direction of influence (inward or outward)	Direct to the community

SEA provided me with a means to study new forms of social relations that come into being through imaginaries and communities of practice. As Franz and Sidford (2017) argued about SEA: “belief in the agency and responsibility of art and artist, the use of 'forms' and 'materials' beyond those used in studio art, the creation process often involves artists working in collaboration” (p.11). The authors added: “It often includes a subject matter that addresses social, political, or economic issues but is not necessary.”

As an artist, scholar, curator, and community member, I facilitated SEA practices as a resource to enhance social conviviality and integration. Contributing to understanding my community and developing knowledge promotes togetherness, tolerance, and a place of identity.

### ***Data collection***

My data was collected in the three iterative Art-Based Action Research (ABAR) proposed cycles. In this section, I will detail my data, what I did with it, and how I analyzed it. Each cycle had four phases:

**In my preliminary work,** I explored and critically examined the site's physical, cultural, and political context. The essential elements were the historical heritage sites, the natural elements like the enormous tree at the Horse Place land (approx. 80 years old), rue Ottawa, Horse Palace history, Fonderie Darling, and the neighbourhood. I reviewed the background of precedents and economic and territorial conditions and framed the context. I analyzed the context, both functional and as a phenomenon, and defined a series of positions to determine which aspects could be addressed with

art strategies. I documented the site using photography, archives, the library, interviews, and site mapping.

**Investigation/Design** entailed selected conversations with the community and Fonderie Darling members, research in archives, and documentation (Kester, 2013). This preliminary work helped me understand the area and see the possible connections of creative collaboration between artists, cultural organizations, and community members. **Making actions/Artwork** involved three different interventions with the active participation of local communities, friends, and artists; action research tools involved prompts, brainstorming with participants and talking and thinking aloud. **Observing/documenting** included mapping, community surveys, participant observation, photography of the process, evaluation of the execution of the interventions and the creative process. **Reflecting/Evaluating** involved a holistic approach from the beginning of the process until results that supported reflection as a learning experience.

I considered how participants' level of creative control contributed to best practices that engage the community in meaningful ways (Brown & Novak-Leonard, 2011). At the same time, I reflected on the role of the SEA artist as a facilitator-educator working in different circumstances, whether from an institution or on her own in the community. As a SEA-led pedagogy with a process of personal conceptual inquiry and making meaning, my approach required that I *attempt to think* relationally, meaning, as Education Professor Elizabeth Ellsworth argued, “an attempt to understand and talk about the nature of reality in a way that acknowledges that to be alive and to inhabit a body is to be continuously and radically in relation with the world, with others, and with what we make of them” (2005, p.4). Moreover, I discuss the role of artists and educators in the community and how curatorial SEA projects could become a pedagogical learning experience. In my work, I reflect on

equity, diversity, and inclusion in art interventions, public spaces, and the community and how SEA can collaborate to improve community quality of life.

Data collection involved documenting and evaluating the process and results of implementing the art interventions using participant observation, a journal of activities, surveys, and artifact analysis (Saldaña, 2014, 2021).

### ***Research plan phases***

The research plan unfolded through several phases, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding and transformation of the SEA and the community. I implemented the phases and cycles of the research as I described (see Appendices A, Figure 45)

The initial phase involved formulating the dissertation project proposal, which included preliminary work, contextual research, literature review, methodology articulation, background establishment, and obtaining ethical approval. Following this, the first intervention at Fonderie Darling focused on investigating the community outreach background and future aims, fostering collaboration with the Fonderie Darling team and community through contextual and networking research. This phase involved actions such as photography workshops exploring personal narratives and the urban environment. The subsequent execution of the first iteration comprised observing, documenting, mapping, conducting community surveys, participant observation, and evaluating the Socially Engaged Art (SEA) implementation process, culminating in reflective evaluation and reporting.

The second intervention shifted the focus to mapping Rue Ottawa and the Horse Palace, encompassing urban mapping through participant documentation, notetaking, drawing, and

audio/visual recordings. This collaborative process resulted in a collective mapping, with subsequent actions mirroring those of the first intervention, involving observation, documentation, and reflective evaluation. By the end of spring 2023, I obtained ethical approval for the third iteration. The third intervention centred around disruption, an open art/design call, which sought to raise community awareness and inspire future actions in the symbolic space of the Horse Palace Land, as well as think about community. This phase involved seeking visions for reclaiming and improving the space through community integration, public art, and urban interventions. Actions included a virtual exhibition of design and art ideas alongside observation, documentation, and reflective evaluation.

The research plan concluded with a general reflection phase and a comparative analysis to address the research question: What could be the role of SEA curators and educators like me in helping the sense of community and place? This led to the final phase: the retrospective analysis of the entire project, culminating in the writing of the thesis. The synthesis of these meticulously planned phases ensured a thorough exploration of SEA and the community, fostering engagement and contributing valuable insights to the urban experience, art education, socially engaged artist identity and community.

Thus, at the end of the pandemic, amid the incertitude of the post-pandemic consequences, I embarked on the quest to explore Art-Based Action Research (ABAR) to curate Socially Engaged Art (SEA) interventions in my new home, Griffintown, Montreal. In the next chapter, I describe and discuss my first intervention.

### III



*Intersection, E.Zavarce 2020*

### **CHAPTER III: FIRST INTERVENTION | URBAN SENSORIALITY -STARTING THE CONVERSATION.**

*From an Institution*

#### ***Introduction***

In this chapter, I present my first intervention as part of the methodology proposal for my dissertation research. As a departure point of my study on developing a sense of community and place by examining Socially Engaged Art (SEA) interventions through Art-Based Action Research (ABAR). For the first intervention, I invited selected community members to participate in a photography workshop. The process of formative evaluations allowed progressive refinements from the implementation of the workshop's first session until the fourth successive workshop and later to the planning of the second intervention (Collins, 2004).

Using ABAR as my methodology, I implemented the first intervention in my new home: Griffintown, Montreal. The community members were not just participants but integral to the success of the intervention. I facilitated the first intervention by inviting them to share sensorial experiences toward engaging with the urban environment.

I began my proposal research plan in the fall of 2022 as part of the Elspeth McConnell Fine Arts Internship at Fonderie Darling, situated at the edge of Griffintown; as introduced in Chapter I, Fonderie Darling has long been a beacon of contemporary art creation and preservation of industrial heritage. My proposed internship plan centred on developing outreach community art projects to foster connections and dialogue within the neighbourhood.

This chapter examines how SEA and urban sensoriality relate to engaging the community and how knowing about the place helps individuals develop connections and a sense of belonging. Building from SEA, built environment, urban sensoriality, and public pedagogy, the results produced a pedagogy about conducting inclusive, accessible, and sustainable SEA interventions in communities. Understanding the urban experience of community reveals the complex dimensions of human relations and place perception. The formative evaluation process allowed conceptual adjustments and strategic actions to plan the second intervention (Collins, 2004).

### ***Making Meaning of Place, Sensorial and Embodied Experiences.***

My background as an architect heavily influenced the premise of this intervention. The formative days of my architectural studies in Maracaibo, the city that warmly welcomed my family and where I grew up, fostered not only conversations with friends and classmates but also instilled a profound love for the city. Thus, I examined how learning about a place's past and present contributed to cultivating a sense of community.

As mentioned in Chapter I, positioning myself as a migrant is significant because my questions about belonging, sense of community, and place stem from the feelings of displacement and lack of belonging that come with being a migrant. The rapidly changing neighbourhood of Griffintown in Montreal, with its rich industrial past and contested present, became our chosen place to live and the focus of my dissertation research.

I started this new journey as a migrant in 2019, simultaneously with my Ph.D., just before the start of the pandemic. Amidst those turbulent days of the pandemic, I began to think a lot about this new face of my identity. The sense of displacement made me realize the importance of things that I

had taken for granted: community, affective bonds, the spontaneity of friendly daily conversations, and the social structures that I once had.

In this new phase of my life and feeling part of a global phenomenon, I hoped to invite more people to learn and enjoy this “uncanny displacement and ambiguity,” mending ourselves, building communities, and repairing the world (Chambers, 2008).

In the initial intervention, I delved into sensorial experiences, urban atmosphere characterization, architectural recognition, and historical awareness (Lynch, 1964; Pallasmaa, 2012; Zardini, 2005), along with the relational experience of workshop participants. I experimentally examined embodied pedagogies emerging from immersing the body in situations that foster learning through bodily perception. This approach directly engages the body in perception, emotion, construction, and the experiential aspect of learning. (Ponty, 1975; Pallasmaa, 2006). I drew from classical authors like Merleau-Ponty (1975), his phenomenological approach that delves into the embodied nature of perception and experience, and John Dewey's contributions to the experiential and sensory aspects of learning. (Dewey, 2005).

Lynch's (1964) ideas of embodied urbanism also impacted my approach. Ideas like place attachment and identity, navigability, and wayfinding yield a rich and meaningful experience for participants. (Lynch, 1964). During a photography workshop, I also applied Pallasmaa's (2012) insights into the role of senses, beyond vision, in perception to understand how participants engage with the urban environment.

Additionally, in this chapter, I build upon foundational ideas discussed in the second chapter, mainly focusing on new pedagogies within the context of the built environment. Paul Langdon's

(1996) Ph.D. thesis centred on a curriculum aiming to capture the significance of the built environment in understanding our past, present, and future. His emphasis on phenomenology and democratic values, advocating for a just and compassionate society, remains influential. Additionally, Olive Gude's (2007) concept of "Attentive Living" resonates, emphasizing the vital experience of everyday life in art education. Langdon and Gude highlight the importance of understanding agency in built environment education. Moreover, Soja's (2009) concepts of the city, spatial justice, and "third space" highlight the layered nature of urban spaces and their dynamic integration of historical, social, and cultural dimensions. This resonates with Bhabha's (1994) "third space," a site of hybridity where cultural identities are redefined and contested. These frameworks illuminate the fluidity of identities and the transformative potential of urban environments.

***Methodology: The first intervention. From an institution: The Fonderie Darling.***

My first intervention followed the cycles proposed by Jokela and Huhmarniemi (2018) and Jokela and Hiltunen (2019), which involved planning and investigation, making the initial intervention, and reflection/evaluation. This first intervention resulted in a cyclical and dialogical approach tailored to community and place-based research. Drawing from my experiences as an architect, professor, and researcher, I implemented ABAR principles, which encompass problem-solving, understanding situations, data collection, collaborative research, and empowerment for community and environmental design (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018). Reflective data collection was crucial, encompassing various materials such as notes, visuals, sketches, discussions, surveys, and the systematic documentation of researcher observations. (Schön, 1991)

The first intervention took place between August 2022 and January 2023. The Investigation/Design began with my preparation for my internship at Fonderie Darling at the

beginning of September. Making action/Artwork and Observing /Documenting started on November 6, and Reflecting/Evaluating ended with the conceptualization and ethical form for the second intervention.

ABAR emphasized the importance of making the artistic process and results accessible to a diverse audience, ensuring effective criteria for generating ideas, feelings, empowerment, and increasing participants' confidence. Results were intended for various audiences, including participating stakeholders, the academic community, the art world, and the public, contributing to understanding art and art education. The participatory nature of ABAR addressed human factors, making ethical choices essential. Ethical considerations were integral at every stage, aligning pragmatic objectives with community values and political views.

### *The procedure of the first intervention:*

#### **1st Intervention: Photography workshop - personal narratives and the urban landscape**

In this initial intervention, I conceptualized a communal photographic workshop, inviting adults to explore urban environments and share personal narratives. The fundamental premise was driven by the research goal: "Imaging a Sense of Place and Community." The workshop aimed to create an enjoyable, communal art-making experience, encompassing neighbourhood observation, a semi-guided tour of Griffintown, and capturing images while engaging in meaningful conversations.

This intervention emphasized the sensory aspects of the urban landscape and the participants' personal experiences within the chosen urban environment. The planned activities included introducing the workshop, discussing the designated route, sharing, and inviting participants to rediscover these sites using my optical lenses and final debrief. I executed a guided tour of the area,

during which participants would take pictures, ask questions, and gain insights into various locations' historical and cultural significance.<sup>34</sup>

The rationale behind this intervention was rooted in my research proposal's argument: learning about the neighbourhood fosters a sense of belonging, connects individuals to the material and social significance of the site, and sharing personal stories can lead to social connections and a sense of community.

I created an open invitation using a poster that received ethical approval from Concordia University's ethics committee. The poster was shared through Fonderie Darling's social media channels (Facebook and Instagram) and my own (Facebook and Instagram). I also sent the invitation directly to close artist friends and neighbours. I did not know who would respond to the invitation or participate each day. This uncertainty was challenging to manage initially.

### ***Workshop Journal Notes: Capturing Griffintown.***

In this section, I share some notes from the workshop journal that encapsulate the experiences and reflections from my four distinctive sessions, which were held between November 6 and November 27, 2022.

**First Day of the Workshop:** On a sunny day, November 6, 2022, I gathered a group of friends at the entrance of Fonderie Darling for the first photography workshop. With four

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<sup>34</sup> I invited participants to rediscover the sites with an optical lens I have used in my visual explorations. I planned to invite participants to share their images. This workshop was offered to accommodate a group of ten (10) adults max.

participants, we explored the 20th-anniversary exhibition. We delved into the history of Fonderie Darling, extending the walk to Silo #5 [Silo #5, located in Old Montreal, is a prominent and historic grain elevator complex. Built between 1906 and 1958, it played a significant role in the city's industrial and port history.<sup>35</sup>]. Along the way, I highlighted public artworks and discussed the industrial past of Griffintown. At Silo #5, participants experimented with optical lenses. We stopped at a local coffee shop before returning to Fonderie, offering a guided basement tour and concluding the activity at 3 pm.

**Second Day of the Workshop:** On a windy day, November 13, 2022, at 12:15 pm, participants gathered for the second workshop. This time, the activity was publicized on Instagram, Fonderie Darling, and my social media, using a Google form for reservations. Despite the cold weather, four participants joined, retracing the route from the first day. Rene, a professional tour guide, added unique insights. We shared optical lenses, creating an engaging atmosphere. Ultimately, I planned a tea and cookies gathering at the Fonderie, fostering participant interaction. (see image Figure 8).

**Third Day of the Workshop:** Fonderie Darling did not publish posts for the third and fourth workshops, leading me to recruit participants via social media. On November 20, the weather prompted a shorter tour around Fonderie Darling. Two participants, Gustavo and Maria Virginia, explored the area. We adjusted the route due to the weather, focusing on Robert Bourassa Boulevard and discussing post-industrial buildings, condo developments, and public art. The tour concluded

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<sup>35</sup> <https://archive.biennial.com/journal/issue-0/the-shifting-sightlines-of-montreals-silo-no-5>

with a visit to Nadia Myre's<sup>36</sup> sculpture, a rooftop tour, and tea at a cozy spot on the first floor of the residences.

**Fourth Iteration of the Workshop:** On a cold day in late fall, November 27, I hosted the final workshop with friends Christian and Patil. Due to unfavourable weather, the focus shifted to an inside tour, discussing Fonderie's public art collection and anniversary exhibition. The intimate setting facilitated a natural exchange of ideas, enhancing the conversation during tea and cookies. Christian, an art critic, and Patil, a designer from Lebanon, contributed to a rich and pleasant discussion, concluding the photography workshop series.

Through the lens of discovery and shared exploration, these photography workshops captured Griffintown's visual narrative and ignited vibrant conversations among the participants. The interplay of history, art, and personal perspectives put the bricks of community engagement and creative dialogue.

While I did not initially know who would respond to my open invitation, many participants turned out to be artists, neighbours, and individuals connected through my social media outreach. Their diverse backgrounds encompass various experiences, professions, and cultural identities. The participatory nature of the project made their active involvement essential. I explore these dynamics

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<sup>36</sup> Nadia Myre is an interdisciplinary artist, Concordia professor, and Algonquin member of the Kitigan Zibi Anishnabeg First Nation. Her artwork is nationally recognized and is part of the collections of Canada's major museums. She was a Fonderie Darling resident from 2016-2019. The first work of hers I experienced was *The Indian Act* (2002), which I encountered on my trip to Canada in 2006. It was striking to find such powerful personal and political artwork at the same time.

in Chapter VI, focusing on how participants' unique identities and contributions shaped the interventions and informed my reflections.

**Figure 8**

*Journal notes: at the Fonderie Darling rooftop.*



The second session of the urban photography workshop. 1. In front of the Silo #5 site, we shared optical lenses, capturing, distorting, and engaging with the space. 2. Later, at the Fonderie Darling, we engaged in a friendly conversation, enjoying the layers of Griffintown's history. Source: Lea Elina Hofer, participant in the second session of urban workshop. (2022)

### ***Ignition of a Conversation, Building Dialogues***

Building upon the rich interactions of the photography workshops, I will discuss how this first SEA intervention served as an opportunity for the community to encounter and learn.

During the implementation of the first intervention in the autumn of 2022, I took on the role of a cultural mediator at Fonderie Darling for its 20th-anniversary exhibition. This marked a significant shift for me, working as a cultural mediator with institutional support to engage with the community. It provided a meaningful connection and a valuable opportunity for my workshop to conduct guided tours for the urban photography workshop at Fonderie Darling, coinciding with its anniversary exhibition. The tours revolved around the exhibition titled "Tu m'enveloppes et je te contiens," curated by Milly-Alexandra Dery, featuring ten artists invited to create works related to the history of the place, art, and the institution.

It was especially significant for me to encounter the work of the artist Guillaume Adjutor Provost, who created an installation in the basement with artworks by artists from the Fonderie Darling collection. The artist's proposal included the protocol for the guided basement tour. The artist's statement of the curatorial installation included a particular and enigmatic quote from Grand Antonio as the title of the artwork: "I am writing my life storybook for big success around the world. I hope for your collaboration. Waiting for your answer soon. Thank you very much." (Adjutor Provost, 2022, w/p; Grand Antonio, 1974)<sup>37</sup>. A non-common and long title, not easy to understand as so. However, the selected quote as the title had the power to connect the participants with the past, present, and future of Griffintown. The quote serves as a bridge that links multiple layers of time and place—connecting participants to Griffintown's historical context (past), the art installation's immediate experience (present), and the potential interpretations or inspirations it may evoke

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<sup>37</sup> More information about grand Antonio: <https://www.musee-mccord-stewart.ca/en/blog/grand-antonio/>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Antonio](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Antonio)

(future). The open-ended narrative resonated with me in themes such as ambition, collaboration, and storytelling, inviting us to reflect on the area's history of resilience and transformation. My reference to bridge the "past, present, and future" suggested that the quote's mysterious nature activates a sense of continuity, making it not just a label for the artwork but a part of the viewer's engagement with the space and its evolving story.

At the end of our journey around Griffintown, following the artist protocol, I made a guided tour with the participants of the basement of the 19th-century excavated foundation of the building. The experience allowed me to awaken glances, discover subjectivities, and articulate narratives. It was a collective transformative experience as we found ourselves thinking about “things that sleep,” Adjustor (2023) argued in his artist's statement: “dormant until the moment of their potential reactivation.” They wake up with our gaze. I must mention that the title of Adjustor Provost's artwork was a quote from Gran Antonio's letters found in a box at the Fonderie Darling<sup>38</sup>. That peculiar and enigmatic quote had the power to move our imagination as much as forgotten things, the artist's intentional significance and spatiality of the basements, and the collective experience as planned by the artist.

What could have ignited a conversation? The conversation started from multiple overlapping layers of meaning and experience, each sparking potential connection: the industrial history and transformation of Griffintown, the guided tour's sensory experiences, the creative interplay in the

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<sup>38</sup> There is no official explanation of these archives. However, it seems one of Gran Antonio's last jobs was around Quartier Éphémère (it used to be Griffintown until the '90s), and apparently, he gave the box to a worker at the Darling Brother foundry. (Darling Brother Ltd)

exhibition, Guillaume Adjutor Provost's site installation, and Gran Antonio's evocative quote. These components wove a thoughtful narrative intertwining past, present, and future, inviting engagement and discourse.

Within Fonderie Darling's active heartbeat, the history and transformation symphony echoes converged. Griffintown became a tapestry of interwoven threads—its historical roots, present realities, and imagined future—sparking conversations in a shared space for communal reflection.

These elements evoked curiosity, reflection, and a sense of belonging or dislocation. They invited participants to engage deeply with both the physical environment and the conceptual framework of the experience. As a curator and educator in Socially Engaged Art (SEA), I saw these connections as vital to fostering a sense of community and place within Griffintown's shifting landscape.

The first intervention was also an opportunity to ponder myself as a cultural mediator at Fonderie Darling. Pringle (2009) argued about the role of artists working with the public and artist-led pedagogy. As the author mentioned, I connected my experience as a creative practitioner to instigate a transforming experience while simultaneously introducing a communal experience.

### ***Formative Evaluation of the First Intervention: Challenges and Analysis***

The formative evaluation of the first intervention identified several challenges affecting its participatory and collaborative goals, including weather issues, recruitment difficulties, tour timing, and ethical concerns. These challenges prompted solutions like improving promotional materials, refining recruitment strategies, and creating structured guides to enhance engagement. For instance, adverse weather and late promotion limited attendance, highlighting the need for earlier, clearer

outreach efforts. Recruitment was further impacted by unclear objectives, addressed by providing precise information and on-site materials.

Timing concerns about the guided tour led to suggestions for balancing structured and free exploration time. Ethical considerations around photo sharing prompted tools like Google forms for feedback and Mailchimp for communication, emphasizing respectful participant engagement. A SWOT analysis underscored strengths such as institutional support and community networks, alongside weaknesses like recruitment challenges and language barriers. Opportunities lay in the venue's relevance and public interest in Griffintown, while threats included local disinterest and budget constraints.<sup>39</sup>

These reflections informed actionable strategies for future interventions, ensuring more robust participant engagement and ethical alignment.

### ***Workshop follow-up: Building Transformative Conversation***

I planned the workshop as a semi-guide tour, open to spontaneous conversations, where participants could meet and feel confident talking. In this sense, the objective of the activity was successful. However, at the end of the iteration, I wondered if I should have prepared some

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<sup>39</sup> Summarizing a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the first intervention highlighted several strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths included the venue's historical context, support from the institution, engaged participants, the facilitator's passion and experience, and the researcher's network in the community. Weaknesses encompassed weather conditions, unclear expected outcomes, a lengthy guided tour, recruitment challenges, an unpredictable number of participants, language barriers, and the researcher's foreign origin. Opportunities included discussions about the contested area of Griffintown, current interest in its future, public space at Fonderie Darling, and the construction of The Réseau express métropolitain (REM) Threats involved the construction of REM, a lack of neighbour interest, and budget constraints. This comprehensive evaluation provided valuable insights for refining strategies in subsequent interventions, considering the identified challenges and opportunities.

questions to prompt the conversation and make the data collection more manageable for my research. At the end of each workshop session, I told the participants we would keep in touch and reminded them to send me some pictures from the activity. Thus, I decided to do a follow-up Google form with a thankful note, a reminder to send the pictures, and just three simple questions: How satisfied were you with the workshop? What were your key takeaways from this event? Do you have any additional comments regarding the workshop?

First responses: Before I completed the follow-up form, Denise responded with a series of pictures that she shared through her Instagram. Beatriz also sent me her pictures and a beautiful reflection. This Google follow-up form helped me send reminders and get participant feedback about the activity. The complete transcripts of the responses are in Appendices B, Figure 50 (*Google form follow-up first intervention.*)

The Socially Engaged Art (SEA) intervention facilitated transformative dialogue by encouraging participants to engage with Griffintown's urban history and artistic potential. Following the ABAR phases—investigation, action, observation, and reflection—key themes emerged from the Google Forms feedback form: Connecting to the Site and Art as Collaborative Change.

Connecting to the Site: Participants included Denise, a workshop attendee, who shared: “Exploring this part of the city through someone else's eyes was amazing. Learning about the history of the Fonderie Darling was significant.”<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Beatriz reflected on her newfound connection: “Thinking about the history of that part of our city, I was really moved. I felt a sense of belonging

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<sup>40</sup> (D. Olivares, personal communication, Nov 30, 2022), the participants' comments were gathered in a Google form.

that I had not felt elsewhere.” Lucine, a Concordia colleague, encouraged a broader perspective: “Search deeply in what is the meaning of a place beyond your personal lens.” Maria Virginia, a new resident of Griffintown, emphasized the importance of uncovering local beauty, stating: “We need to know more about our neighbourhood and how lovely it is.”

Art as Collaborative Change: The photography workshop became a platform for fostering creativity and community. Shahnaz, a participant from the first session, who came with Denise, remarked, “How art can transform spaces and reflect the history of a place.” Lea, another attendee<sup>41</sup>, highlighted the interplay between architecture, art, and community: “There is an ongoing dialogue between architecture, art, and us living in the environment. Change is collaborative, and we can shape future possibilities.”<sup>42</sup> Rene, my neighbour in Griffintown, spoke to the integrative potential of art, sharing “the interconnections that art provides.”<sup>43</sup> At the same time, Maria Escalona noted the dual temporal impact of the experience: “I learned so much about the area of Griffintown and met new people. It felt like a walk-through of time and space at the same time.”<sup>44</sup>

The workshop underscored the value of art as a tool for understanding Griffintown's history, fostering a sense of belonging, and envisioning a collaborative future. Participants, from new residents to seasoned locals and Concordia friends, used the opportunity to reflect on the

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<sup>41</sup> Lea, a student, and Christian, an art critic, were the only attendees who came through the Fonderie Darling social media invitation. The second intervention was just Sussan.

<sup>42</sup> (L. Hofer, personal communication, Nov 16, 2022), the participants' comments were gathered in a Google form.

<sup>43</sup> (R. Lemieux, personal communication, Nov.15, 2022), the participants' comments were gathered in a Google form.

<sup>44</sup> (M. Escalona, personal communication, January 31, 2023), the participants' comments were gathered in a Google form.

neighbourhood's past, present, and transformative potential. Through shared experiences and artistic engagement, the intervention facilitated a deeper connection to place and community.<sup>45</sup>

### *The virtual gallery: CARE*

ABAR focuses on making artistic results accessible to participants and fostering dialogue. After evaluating different options, I created an online exhibition before the in-person one. The criteria for the proposed virtual exhibition of the first intervention was to present the participant's outcomes as part of an ongoing research project, an ongoing process, and an experimental learning process. Therefore, I conceived the online platform and envisioned the online platform as a space to present myself, my research, and the context of the research—Griffintown. This platform allowed me to add new material as the three interventions unfolded continuously.

After other title attempts, I came up with an exciting and succinct way to name my site. Contemporary Art Research Explorations: CARE. Contemporary because, as Irit Rogoff (2013) argued in the essay “The Expanding Field.”: “(...) contemporaneity as a series of affinities with contemporary urgencies and the ability to access them in our work” (p.17). Affinities and urgencies might be one of my reasons for using SEA as art-based action research (ABAR). The acronym CARE was also significantly meaningful and connected to care for: “to take thought for, provide for, look after, take care of” (Oxford English Dictionary, n/d).

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<sup>45</sup> All these quotes from Google form workshop feedback. All participants signed an ethical agreement to disclose their names.

Curating CARE served as a methodological strategy for my research, giving me insights into the data collection. The formative analysis of the process helped me conceptualize the subsequent intervention. The curatorial aspect goes from research to dissemination via the online CARE platform (De Bont, 2022). Viewers can navigate through the gallery, explore different sections, and interact with the visual content, fostering a deeper understanding of the research.

From the group of artworks submitted for the first intervention, I conceptualized arranging them in four curatorial themes: urban sensorium, connecting and sharing, exploring changing perspectives, and imagining alternative futures. Also, some of the participants' comments make a fluid visual dialogue.<sup>46</sup>

### ***CARE: The Virtual Encounter Space***

Facilitating SEA's first intervention involved integrating sensory exploration of the urban landscape, promoting material recognition, and emphasizing the transformative potential of learning. This approach enhanced private and communal lives by connecting individuals to their environment and shared experiences.

CARE, the curatorial virtual gallery, as a virtual space of encounter, allowed me to represent and showcase my research participants' submissions visually. This enhanced the communicative power of my research, enabling a broader audience to engage directly with the visual aspects of my research.

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<sup>46</sup> Follow the link to see the web page: <https://elsyzavarce.wixsite.com/care/first-intervention>

As research that involves a community or collaborative aspect, CARE serves as a communal space where participants and other stakeholders can revisit and appreciate the research's outcomes. This contributes to community building and shared experiences.

The curatorial process guides viewers through a curated journey, emphasizing key themes, connections, or transformations from the intervention. Lea, one of the second workshop participants, shared: “By photographing the area through the lenses, we were also quite literally able to see it from a different perspective, intervene, and explore other possibilities of what it could look like.” (Lea Elina Hofer, 2022)

### Figure 9

*Themes and images of the virtual Gallery of the first intervention.*

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Urban sensorium:

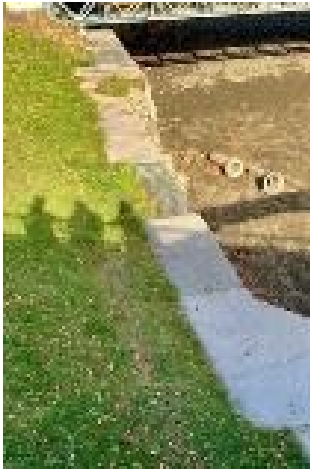


Denise Olivares

Connecting, Sharing:



Denise Olivares



Beatriz Lopez



Christian Roy

Exploring changing perspectives:



Shannaz Munei



Lea Elina Hofer

Imaging alternatives futures:



Stefania Hernandez



Gustavo Galue

Source: Zavarce, Gallery photos taken and sent to me by participants during the first intervention. 2022

In Figure 9, we can appreciate the themes and some original images sent by participants for the virtual gallery of the first intervention. My curatorial approach considers what it means to put art into the public, acknowledging how each decision will affect visual communication and the depiction of ideas. (Lind, 2021, para. 8).<sup>47</sup>

### ***Social Skills and Socially Engaged Art (SEA): Facilitating Co-Constructive Learning***

The socially engaged artist plays a pivotal role in communities by leveraging social skills to foster collaboration, build partnerships, and address critical social issues. Understanding the value of Socially Engaged Art (SEA) in communities involves recognizing its potential to bring people together, establish community partnerships, and promote dialogue and critical thinking (Helguera, 2011).

Drawing on the insights of performance creator and cultural animator Diane Roberts in her talk on "*Creative Businesses and the Business of Creativity*," the capacity to build partnerships emerges as a key skill for artists. Roberts (2023) contends that artists uniquely bring diverse individuals together and foster collaborative efforts, highlighting the significance of collaboration across various societal fields. What specific skills enable artists to achieve such collaboration and community-building?

Before the intervention, networking and research activities around the site, such as Fonderie Darling, showcased the significance of adept social engagement. Effective verbal and non-verbal

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<sup>47</sup> The virtual gallery can be visited at the link: <https://elsyzavarce.wixsite.com/care/first-intervention>

communication emerged as fundamental to establishing a foundation for co-constructive learning during the intervention. Post-intervention, sustaining engagement and dialogue proved challenging, prompting me to consider strategies to maintain the loop of communal involvement.

The intervention underscored that social skills are crucial during the artistic process intervention and before and after. Networking and ongoing communication are essential for sustained community engagement. The discussion raises questions about maintaining the loop of engagement post-intervention and acknowledging the temporal and relational dimensions of socially engaged practices.

Helguera (2011) points out that artists must develop social skills to achieve their goals; he mentioned communication skills, how to moderate a conversation, and negotiation skills on how to negotiate among interests in a group or assess the complexities of a given social situation and learn how to balance with artistic liberty. Roberts (2023) also mentioned how the future is in collaboration among the different fields of society. What are these skills that make people come together?

In this first intervention, I realized that much of the socially engaged artist's role in communities relates to their social skills. Social skills are essential to any SEA before, during, and after the intervention. An important task before the intervention is networking and researching the community of Fonderie Darling. During the intervention, verbal and nonverbal communication were pivotal in fostering interaction and connection. After the first intervention, I thought it was essential to maintain this connection, a process I described as 'keeping the loop.' By 'keeping the loop,' I referred to continuing the relationship and dialogue established during the intervention. This involves finding ways to sustain engagement through follow-up discussions, shared reflections, or collaborative activities that build on the initial exchange. My question revolved around effectively

nurturing and preserving this sense of connectedness over time. This aspect shaped my second and third interventions, ending with the final event called *Nos vamos de arepada*.

SEA's value in communities is its potential to unite people, collaborate, and build community partnerships. In this sense, promoting dialogue, critical thinking, and creative outputs significantly contributed. ABAR helped me facilitate SEA to achieve dialogic forms of co-constructive learning with participants. Looking back, I think this has been an essential aspect of my learning. Speaking about social skills has been a profound subject for personal reflection.

### ***Challenging Stereotypes: The Evolution of my Social Skills as a Socially Engaged Artist.***

Throughout my artistic journey, I often hid behind the stereotype of the eccentric creator to justify my limited social skills. The image of the avant-garde artist from the early 20th century played a role in disseminating this perception, and influenced by it, I embraced this label. My school experience, where I excelled in everything except "social adjustment," where I was graded with a C, reinforced this notion.

However, along my path, I found inspiration in artists who have cultivated a socially engaged attitude. This commitment has meant stepping out of my comfort zone and challenging the narrative of the isolated artist. While my social adjustment was poorly evaluated in elementary school, I have learned that socially engaged art urges us to break free from the isolation of individual production and encourages interaction and connection with society. On this journey, I have discovered that my social skills can evolve and that my authentic artistic expression lies in the interrelation with others and the world around us.

### *Collective Sensorial and Relational Learning Experience*

What can we learn from this experience? A first approximation of the images captured by participants and their comments shows a renewed gaze and reflection toward the urban environment. As Feld & Basso (1996: 11) argued, the experience contributed to a sense of rootedness, contributing to an “experiential and expressive way place-know, imagined, yearn for (...).”

The initial analysis of images and participant comments showed a deeper appreciation for Griffintown's aesthetic qualities, and capturing these elements through photography encouraged reflection on the significance of their surroundings.

The urban photography workshop and the virtual gallery CARE fostered a transformative experience. Participants captured images and contributed to a deeper understanding of the urban environment, fostering a sense of connection, rootedness, and affective learning through the expressive medium of photography and the virtual encounter in the curation of a virtual gallery.

It was a collective sensory and relational learning experience. The first intervention constituted an encounter in which a group collectively engaged in sensory experiences, fostering relational connections and emphasizing an experiential, sensory-driven approach to learning.

The urban photography workshop, as SEA, provided participants with a deeper understanding of the urban environment and contributed to creating a shared narrative and identity within the community. It aligns with urban photography as a community expression and reflection tool, enriching the embodied urbanism experience.

### ***SEA as a mediator, mediator as performance: Mediating identity***

The unique opportunity to work as a cultural mediator at the Fonderie Darling during its 20th-anniversary exhibition, along with experiencing Adjutor Provost's installation in the basement featuring works from the collection and the guided tour protocol, provided me with a new perspective. I immersed myself in the exhibition for three transformative months as a cultural mediator. This experience was a journey, a performance. I engaged with the community, awakened new perspectives, discovered diverse subjectivities, and wove narratives transcending borders.

Through poetry, visual art, and personal reflection, I developed a zine project to capture the essence of my experience during those three months. (see Appendices D: Figure 51, Figure 52, Figure 53, Figure 54). It delves into the multifaceted layers of identity, migration, and cultural exchange, offering readers a window into the world of cultural mediation, art, and the challenges and joys of bridging different worlds. The zine project, titled 'Mediating Identity,' delves deep into my role as a mediator, an artist, and an art educator. It explores my journey as a migrant, navigating the complexities of professional life in a foreign country while oscillating between two different languages and cultures, far from my mother tongue.

I include the Spanish, English, and French poems in Appendices D and the layout of the Zine design (see Appendices D: Figure 51 ). Revisiting this experience a year later, my final words still resonate: "I find art as mediation, mediation as performance. Bienvenue" Me encuentro el arte como mediación, la mediación como performance. Bienvenue).

My initial embrace of SEA as a mediator led to fostering meaningful connections. As a mediator, I began to see myself as a performer, embodying a dynamic and transformative process.

This entailed active engagement, creativity, and adaptability, akin to a performance where I played a central role in orchestrating interactions and shaping experiences. It marked the beginning of delving into mediation through SEA to explore and navigate the complexities of personal and collective identities.

**Figure 10**  
*All roads to Fonderie.*



Image by E.Zavare 2022.

### *Aesthetic Experience and Affective Learning*

Drawing on my background in architecture, I believed that heightened sensory awareness and perceptual development could catalyze transformative learning (Pallasmaa, 2006). However, as I implemented each workshop session, I realized that social interaction and collective sensorial experience were the most critical aspects. The collective sensorial experience deepened our understanding of the urban environment. The social encounter fostered aesthetic, affective learning, echoing Elizabeth Grosz's assertion that "art gives expression to the virtual of the earth through a plane of composition that generates affects and percepts, intensities" (Grosz, 2003, p.84). This collective experience resonated with the excitement I felt during my early days studying architecture, reminiscent of group field trips that were moments of discovery, learning, and the development of a profound love for the city of Maracaibo.

In Chapter II, I presented the work of Gill-Fournier (2024), who argued that we must be more attentive to the affects we mobilize in urban processes. The author discussed the concept of Affective Heritage, and Wells (2017) discusses the stronger rootedness of historic places. This resonated with my participants' interest in historical architecture, their excitement about discovering the basement of the Fonderie Darling, and their learning about Griffintown's history.

As mentioned, upon reviewing the data gathered, it became evident that a fresh perspective and contemplation were directed toward the urban environment. This newfound outlook contributed significantly to connection and belonging, resonating with Basso's notion of experiential place-knowing. As an outcome of the intervention, the virtual gallery became a platform for expression and an avenue for promoting dialogue and critical thinking, aligning with the values inherent in SEA.

As I moved forward to the subsequent intervention, social connection was an important aspect I should care about, balancing the activities and prompting interactive learning. The following intervention, the Urban Mapping Workshop, would be the opportunity for this. I will discuss it in the next chapter. The ABAR framework proved instrumental in guiding and navigating the social dynamics of the first intervention. It encouraged reflexive practices and ongoing reflection, contributing to the adaptability of the workshop procedure and evolving community needs (Schön, 1991). ABAR's role in facilitating dialogic forms of co-constructive learning emerged as pivotal, aligning to promote inclusivity and meaningful community engagement throughout the intervention.

As I continue exploring the intersection of art and social commitment, I have realized that the essence of artistic expression lies in our capacity to transcend the confines of individual creation and actively engage with the expansive social fabric. In essence, this journey has prompted a reassessment of my social skills and illuminated the transformative potential of art when viewed through a socially committed lens. Questions arise, particularly when considering that this social fabric is unfamiliar; it is complex, culturally diverse, and highly dynamic. One of the challenges of my following interventions will be navigating and managing such intricacies.

**Figure 11**  
*Urban workshop first session images*



1. In front of the Silo #5 site, through Stefania's gaze and the optical lens. 2. Later, in the basement of the Fonderie Darling, we immersed ourselves in the Provost's curatorial installation and performance, delving into layers of history and art. Source: Stefania Hernandez 2022.

## IV



*Affective gaze, EZ 2021*

## CHAPTER IV | SECOND INTERVENTION: URBAN MAPPING WORKSHOP IN PUBLIC SPACE.

*From a public space: Place Publique<sup>48</sup>, Rue Ottawa, and the former Horse Palace land.*

### ***Introduction***

In this chapter, I present my second intervention as part of the methodology proposal for my Ph.D. research. Building on the insights and lessons from the photography workshop, my second intervention aimed to explore the potential of Socially Engaged Art (SEA) interventions in fostering a sense of place and community in Griffintown, Montreal. I facilitated an urban mapping workshop through Art-Based Action Research (ABAR), engaging community members in a collaborative and participatory process. This intervention integrated community perspectives and creative expression, promoting a sense of community ownership and social connection and contributing to developing inclusive and socially conscious art practices. Through this iterative process of ABAR, I refined my methodology and deepened my understanding of how SEA interventions can effectively build a sense of place and community.

The idea of the urban mapping workshop came from my background in Architecture and Design, where I implemented ABAR cycles and the formative evaluation of the first intervention. I

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<sup>48</sup> Place Publique du Sable-Gris. Inaugurated in 2023, with a Design landscape by Daoust Lestage and Lizotte and Stecker. The name evokes the important heritage associated with the industrial history of Old Montreal/ Griffintown. It refers to an early metal casting technique developed at the Darling Brothers Foundry, known as “Sable-Gris” (grey sand). <https://daoustlestage.com/en/project/place-du-sable-gris/#>. The name came after a public consultation; more information at the site of Fonderie Darling: <https://fonderiedarling.org/Toponymie-boite-a-outils>

continued with my research plan and embarked on the second intervention in this doctoral journey, this time during the beautiful days of spring, May 2023.

I had previously employed urban mapping as a pedagogical tool within the realms of architecture and design education, and those past experiences demonstrated the effectiveness of urban mapping as a catalyst for fostering environmental awareness, developing environmental sensibility, visualizing environmental data, enhancing spatial understanding, and facilitating embodied learning. Building upon this foundation, the second intervention took a deliberate shift towards leveraging mapping as a mechanism for fostering open communication, embracing diverse perceptions, envisioning alternative futures, and acknowledging the complexities inherent in our understanding of the environment, cities, and the world.

As I delve into this chapter, my narrative unfolds as an exploration of urban mapping and a journey into the transformative power of collective storytelling. I envision the future and cultivate the subjectivity of the community and migrants within the urban fabric.

### ***Mapping as a Tool for Collective Agency***

James Corner, the prominent landscape architect, urban designer, and theorist, explored the emancipatory potential of mapping in *The Agency of Mapping* (1999): "...mappings discover new worlds within past and present ones; they inaugurate new grounds upon the hidden traces of a living context" (p.90). The author developed the idea of mapping as a practice that unveils new realities and relational reasoning, being able to go beyond existing constraints: "And what already exists is more than just the physical attributes of terrain (topography, rivers, roads, buildings) but also includes the various hidden forces that underlie the workings of a given place" (p.90).

When I started my PhD in 2019, I read Kathleen Vaughan's work, which helped me rediscover the joy of mapping. Her work primarily focuses on mapping to represent knowledge of people, practices, and places and establish connections between them. I found her approach aesthetically pleasing and engaging. (Vaughan, 2013).

I had the opportunity to expand my notion of urban mapping with the last course of my PhD. Finally, after the pandemic, Urban Scenography was an in-person course—an intensive summer program facilitated by Dr. Shaunna Jansen. This course provided an opportunity to delve into deep mapping and urban scenography theory within Square Viger, the selected site for the class's collective mapping and personal deep mapping exercises. The experience was profound and impacted me, contributing significantly to my understanding of these concepts.

Shaunna Janssen (2019) offered an urban scenography framework and deep mapping as an invitation to work with situated methods for engaging with the spatial politics of urban changes, focusing on the discursive, social, material, and cultural specificities of a city place of participants. “The practice of urban scenography is a transversal approach to teaching that foregrounds the performativity of learning – meaning social relation” (p. 23). The author added: “...an expanded approach to scenography allows for a more nuanced engagement with the socio-spatial, material, and affective presence of more-than-human cultures that are also shaping urban spaces” (2021, p. 8). For the idea that scenography orients a sense or feeling, Janssen (2019) proposed Performative Mapping:

mappings by walking and sharing each day differently; the site is for experiential, interdisciplinary, and collaborative learning.<sup>49</sup>

Building on these ideas and experiences, the Urban Mapping intervention incorporates expanded scenography and worlding concepts. The idea of urban scenography comes from the theatre; it can be understood as an expanded scenography as Sodja Lotker and Richard Gough, professors and researchers, explained, “Notions of expanded scenography such as environments that we perform in – our home, a restaurant, a cruise ship, a parking lot, a public square, a theatre venue, a parliamentary building, and Everest – make us rethink scenography as a system” (Locker & Gough, 2013, p.3 ).

Architect and professor Gill-Fournir (2024) and his theory of Affective Urbanism proposed affective cartographies, affective heritage, innovation, and urban entrepreneurship that foster the transition towards an ecological citizenship based on care. All these strategies differ from traditional urbanism, but the author argued that they are for creating places that mobilize affection to develop a life worth living.

For the second intervention, I organized an action/artwork. I initiated openly and invited diverse participants, including artists, art students, and community members, to engage in a site mapping activity: an Urban Mapping Workshop. The meeting point was Place Publique in front of

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<sup>49</sup> I developed this idea of how such experiences produce situated and partial knowledge (Haraway, 2006) with Maria Veronica Machado Penso in our article “Pedagogías corporeizadas: Prácticas experiencias, crea (c) tivas y colectivas” (Penso & Zavarce ,2022)

Fonderie Darling. The route extended along Rue Ottawa to the former Horse Palace, and the sessions occurred over two weekends from the beginning of May to June 2023.<sup>50</sup>

As I describe the second ABAR intervention implementing SEA, I discuss how collective mappings are affective gestures toward imaging the community and place in Griffintown.

### *The Designated Route.*

#### **Rue Ottawa, a particular artery of Griffintown, and the Horse Palace land**

Having described Griffintown in the initial chapter of my thesis, the focus now shifts to Rue Ottawa (Ottawa Street) as the designated site for the Urban Mapping Workshop, encompassing Rue Ottawa and the Horse Palace Land. Among the noteworthy streets in Griffintown is Ottawa Street, which commences at the intersection of Queen Street, adjacent to Fonderie Darling, and extends to the intersection of William Street. Like other thoroughfares in Griffintown, Ottawa Street was pivotal in the neighbourhood's industrial history.

As highlighted previously, Griffintown has undergone substantial revitalization and redevelopment recently. Former industrial structures have been metamorphosed into contemporary residential spaces, stylish restaurants, and shops. Ottawa Street has not been exempted from these

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<sup>50</sup> I created a poster and invitation that were shared via Fonderie Darling's social media platforms, my social media (Facebook and Instagram), Griffintown's Facebook groups and directly with a group of individuals for the first intervention, it was an open invitation. This group primarily consisted of my artist and designer friends, their extended networks, my family, and friends of my family. Additionally, one participant joined via the Griffintown Facebook group. While most participants were connected to me or Fonderie Darling, their diverse backgrounds, experiences, and professional practices shaped their contributions and engagement differently. So, the majority were migrants, students, and professionals like engineers, urbanists and architects, and the majority had an artistic or creative inclination, which likely influenced their participation.

transformations, witnessing the emergence of new establishments and businesses along its trajectory. Ottawa Street boasts a diverse blend of residential, commercial, and cultural spaces, featuring a juxtaposition of historic buildings, an Art Center like Fonderie Darling, and modern condominiums. This short street, named in honour of Canada's capital, Ottawa, since 1863, contributes significantly to the historical tapestry of the area.

The Horse Palace Land on Rue Ottawa between Murray Street and Eleonor Street represents a focal point within this context. The historic site was a stable of horses from 1860 until 2019.<sup>51</sup> The Horse Palace Foundation, headed by the landscape architect Patterson, tried to save the structures and develop the 19th-century Montreal History Museum. The old wood structure was demolished, and the three lots, totalling 3,500 square feet, went on the market to be sold separately.

**Figure 12**  
*Composite of images of Griffintown: Location*

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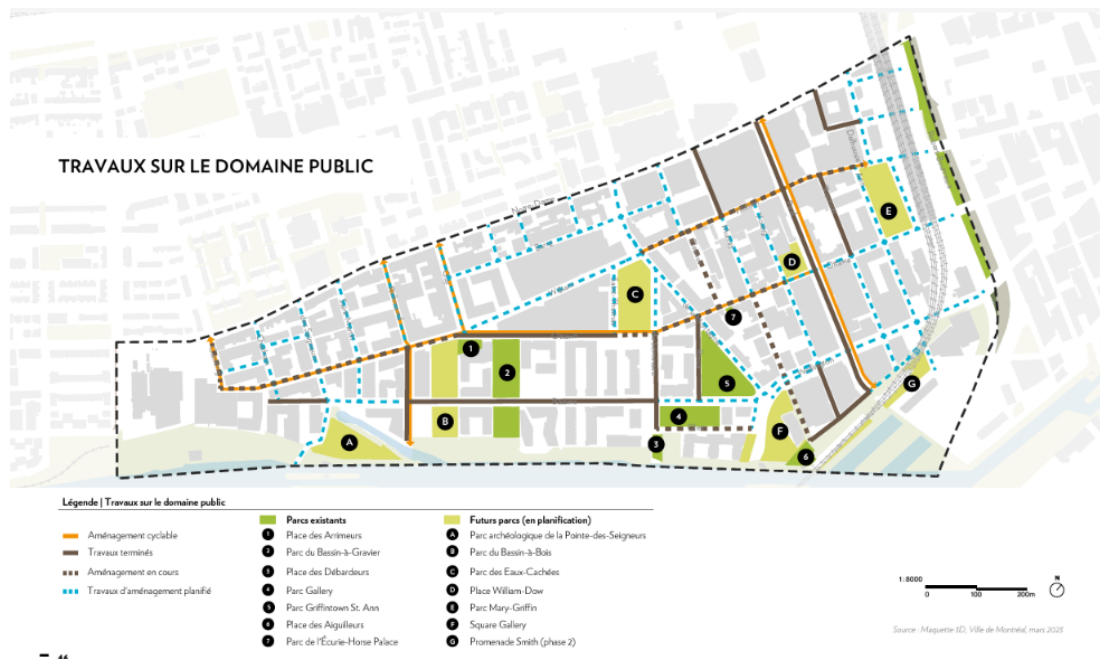
<sup>51</sup> More Montreal's calèche ban: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/caleche-horses-montreal-ban-1.5405151>  
<https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/montreals-horse-drawn-carriage-industry-rides-off-into-history-but-not-quietly>



Location, and Ottawa Street locations. And the Rue Ottawa mapping workshop map..Source: E. Zavarce 2022.

When I moved to the area, I discovered the vacant lot and learned about its historical background; I fell in love with it. I fear developers' occupation and dream of what to do with a meaningful site. Finally, in 2019, the municipality bought two of the lots. In 2022, the new plans for Griffintown were presented. In the Review of the Griffintown Sector Special Planning Programme implementation, the Parc de l'Écurie-Horse Palace is a project for the Horse Place land (Le-Sud-Ouest Montreal, 2023, Montreal-Ville, 2021). (See Figure 13 )

**Figure 13**  
*Griffintown present and future Public Park*



Source: Le-Sud-Ouest Montreal, 2023, p.46

The designated route for the Urban Mapping workshop covered significant architectural and noteworthy sites, from Fonderie Darling through Place Publique du Sable-Gris, Bonaventure Boulevard, and concluding at Horse Place lands (Barlow, 2005).

We encountered public artworks during the workshop that enriched our understanding of the space. At Place Publique, I provided insights into the space's characteristics and recent history, highlighting the works of Maria José Sheriff *Choral* (2006) and French artist Antoine Nessi with the site installation *Sans Titre (enseignes pour une émeute)* (2015), and Abbas Akhavan's sun-driven shadow site installation *Second Nature* (2012), prompting questions of temporality and transformation in the area.

**Figure 14**  
*Artwork at Place Publique du Sable Gris / Fonderie Darling*

1



2



3,4



1. Maria José Sheriff 's *Choral* (2006), 2. Antoine Nessi with the site installation "*Sans Titre (enseignes pour une émeute)*" (2015), and 3. Abbas Akhavan's *Second Nature* (2012), Source: picutres1 and 2 EZ (2024) 3 and 4 and Viviana Murillo (2023)

Continuing our journey along Bonaventure Boulevard, we appreciated Nadia Myre's work *Dans l'attente—While Waiting* (2019), which reflects on the Great Peace agreement of 1701 between the French and the representatives of 39 Indigenous nations in the area. We also explored Jaime Plensa's *Source* (2017), honouring Montreal's rich cultural diversity.

Our route included historical landmarks such as New City Gas<sup>52</sup>, a repurposed industrial complex, Caserne 3, and the renovated 1914 fire station No. 3 at the corner of Young Street and St. Ann's Park<sup>53</sup>. One particularly memorable stop was the HPG Gallery and the Secret Garden at Hôtel Particulier, housed in the historic John Moore House. This building, a preserved remnant of the area's history, had long captured my attention. I distinctly remember passing by it in 2015, when my family had recently moved, and noticing it was abandoned and on sale. Its charming and intriguing

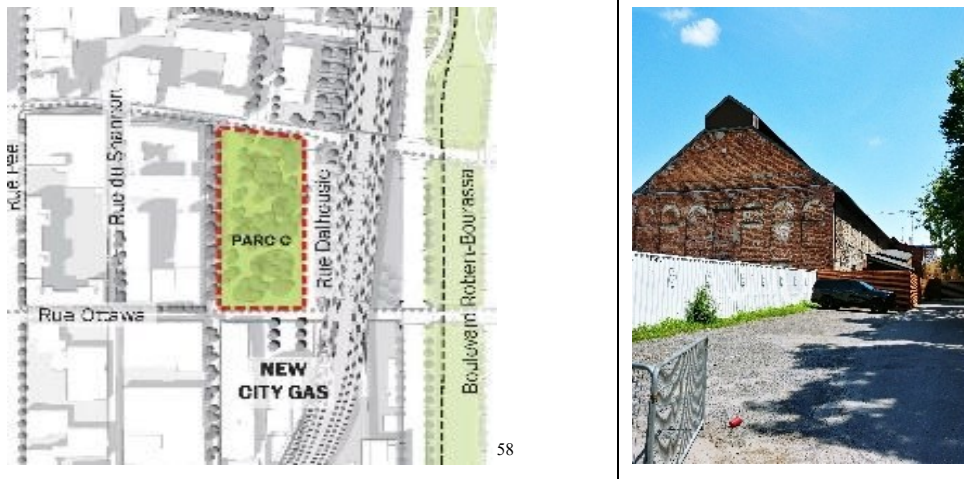
<sup>52</sup> New city gas: <https://www.patrimoine-culturel.gouv.qc.ca/rpcq/detail.do?methode=consulter&id=191016&type=bien>

<sup>53</sup> St. Ann's Park: Situated where the historic St. Ann's Church once stood, the park serves as a poignant reminder of Griffintown's Irish heritage and a gathering place that connects residents to the area's immigrant history.

architectural features left a lasting impression. A few years later, the house was purchased and transformed into a boutique hotel, with the former carriage entrance repurposed as the HPG Gallery.<sup>54</sup>

Discussions also touched on future projects, including the Park of Mary Griffin.<sup>55</sup>; the cultural MR-63<sup>56</sup> Peel project and the return route. This curated route linked past, present, and future narratives, encouraging a holistic appreciation of Griffintown's complex identity.<sup>57</sup>

**Figure 15**  
*Iconic places along the designated route*



<sup>54</sup> During a visit in 2017, I was introduced to the captivating artwork of Dani Hausmann, a Venezuelan artist who had moved to Montreal at the age of eight and pursued studies in architecture. Through the gracious hospitality of the hotel's owner, Mike, I had the chance to meet Dani in person. Over time, Mike, Dani, and I, along with my family, developed a close and meaningful friendship. Thanks to Mike's generosity during the pandemic, the HPG Gallery became a space for exhibitions I organized—a hub for connection, camaraderie, and conversations about identity. These experiences deepened my reflections on Griffintown and the potential of art to foster community.

<sup>55</sup> 1. Park of Mary Griffin: A planned development commemorating Mary Griffin, the area's namesake, symbolizes Griffintown's evolving identity and the blending of its historical roots with future urban initiatives Further info: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/griffintown-park-mary-griffin-1.4592769>

<sup>56</sup> MR-63 Peel Project: This forthcoming cultural project seeks to repurpose old metro cars into creative spaces, embodying innovation and sustainability while fostering community engagement in Griffintown.

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/griffintown-park-mary-griffin-1.4592769>

1.

2. New City Gas.



3. Caserne<sup>59</sup>



4. Jaume Plensa, Boanaventure Boulevard<sup>60</sup>



5. Eleanor Street<sup>61</sup>



6. Horse Palace land in Spring 2023

Photos source 1,3,4 in footnote 2, 5,6 by Théo Chauvirey. (2023)

The selected route, enhanced with notable artworks and historical landmarks, served as a prompt for dialogue and reflection. As we discussed past and future projects, the workshop fostered a deeper connection to the community and its artistic heritage. This immersive experience not only celebrated Griffintown's identity but also laid the foundation for ongoing conversations and future

<sup>59</sup> Caserne #3. Further info <https://ville.montreal.qc.ca/sim/batiments/caserne-3>

<sup>60</sup> <https://artpublicmontreal.ca/en/oeuvre/source-2/>

<sup>61</sup> The House on Eleanor Street: A rare surviving residential structure in the area, this house provides a tangible connection to Griffintown's working-class past, offering a window into its 19th-century life and architecture.

creative initiatives that contribute to fostering a sense of connection and place. Ultimately, I often shared some insights from the illustrated *Griffintown Tour: A self-guided Urban History Walk* (2015). with participants, done by visual artist and Griffintown researcher Scott Macleod.

***Prompt Notes: Sensory Trigger, Sensorial Activator***

A central concern that propelled this intervention was how to spark a plurality of collective writing through urban mapping. The objective was to encourage individual expression and cultivate a communal dialogue that reflected the rich tapestry of perspectives within the workshop setting.

ABAR methodology considers formative analysis and redefines strategic methods. In this sense, I evaluated a given structure for the second intervention workshop. I proposed prompts for the urban mapping workshop as essential tools for guiding participants in their mapping process. These prompts or questions helped participants focus on the information, insights, and actions they needed.

The reason to use prompts was to help participants stay on track: Mapping workshops can be open-ended and overwhelming, and prompts can help guide participants in the right direction. Prompts help participants generate insights: They can help them make connections and identify patterns they might not have noticed otherwise. This can lead to valuable insights and bring new ideas. Prompts can encourage participation and engagement from all participants.

Considering Janssen (2022) and Penso et al. (2022), I designed three prompt tools: Attentive, care and awareness workshop activator, and Collective themes cards; I also handled participants' urban maps of the designated mapping area. This prompt helped me to guide the activity. (See Figure 16)

**Figure 16**  
*Attentive, care, and awareness workshop activator*

<p><b>Attentive, care, and awareness workshop activator</b></p> <p>1st moment (initial gathering)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take a moment to become aware of your surroundings, including the temperature and any notable characteristics.</li><li>• Share your home's location and any interesting information about the trajectory from your home to here.</li><li>• Engage your senses by listening, smelling, touching, and observing your environment.</li><li>• Consider the materials and formal elements of the built environment and how they contribute to the overall experience.</li></ul> <p>2nd moment (individual exploration)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choose a location along Ottawa Street that captures your attention.</li><li>• Observe and document the architecture's details and how people use the space.</li><li>• Take note of the materiality of both the built and natural surroundings.</li><li>• Consider how you arrived at the location and any relevant political or social dynamics at play.</li><li>• I invite you to share your observations in real-time on Instagram Stories, tagging @elsyzavarce and @fonderiedarling.</li></ul> <p>3rd moment (sharing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss the similarities and differences between the various spaces and places along Ottawa Street.</li><li>• Reflect on your relationship with the location, considering various aspects such as materiality, performance, theory, concept, narrative, and emotion.</li><li>• Identify any topics of interest that emerge from your exploration, such as history, politics, form, memories, or experiences, and share your perspective.</li><li>• Consider the future of the location and how it might evolve or change over time.</li><li>• Explore ways to communicate your perceptions and experience of the urban environment through collective urban mapping.</li></ul>
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Source: E. Zavarce 2023.

In the second intervention, I used individual mapping as a prompt for collective mapping. I collected the cards of participants with random words, metaphoric similarities, random ideas, and surprising ideas and relations of participants that helped me see connected themes. See Figure 17.

**Figure 17**  
*Prompts. Selection of maps and Collective cards by participants.*



Source E. Zavarce, (2023).

### ***Urban Mapping Workshop Journal Notes:***

#### **On the first day of the workshop:**

On a sunny but windy day on May 13, 2023, I invited the participants to meet at 12:15 pm at the entrance of the Fonderie Darling. Fonderie Darling published this time the invitation one week in advance. I shared it in my social network, Art Education mailing list, and Griffintown Facebook group. I got four registrations through the Google form, and many friends said they would try to make it. I did not know how many people were coming or their backgrounds.

I arranged a table with all the material at the Place Publique, which was finally completed. The weather was beautiful, with ample sunshine. I had three participants: Denise, Suzanne, and Jose

Antonio. Den, an artist and colleague, participated in the first intervention; Suzanne, a neighbour who found the info through the Facebook group *Nous sommes Griffintown*; and Jose, my husband.

### **On the second day of the workshop:**

The second day of the workshop was a beautiful sunny day on Sunday, May 14, 2023. it was also Mother's Day. I got three participants signed through the Google form; just one came from this list. However, I secured the participation of my participants by inviting my family and some friends to do the workshop and celebrate Mother's Day by doing my work. I enjoyed sharing what I learned about Griffintown, Fonderie Darling, and the public artwork. The action/making of the collective mapping was about being attentive, conscious, and caring about the city, a pedagogical activity that all the group enjoyed. On Sunday, a friendly group of eight participated: Carlos, Stefania, Victoria, Jose Andres, Amir, Patil, Aldrich, and, in the second part, Maria Virginia.

### **On the third day of the workshop:**

On July 8, 2023, at 12:15 pm, after preparing the site for the workshop, I eagerly awaited the arrival of the participants. Accompanying me was my daughter, Alejandrina, who was excited to take part in the workshop. Mariana was the first to arrive, followed by Viviana and later Théo and Mitchel. It was a beautiful sunny day with no wind, providing a perfect setting for the workshop. Due to Montreal's unpredictable weather, I held the workshop on Saturday instead of Sunday to take advantage of the sunny forecast. The well-designed landscaping of the Place Publique, with its extended bank, provided a fitting setting for our gathering. I organized the materials, books, and the collective mapping paper on the large concrete bench.

Having only two days to promote the event, I focused on sending direct messages to friends and people I thought might be interested. To my delight, the group size was just right, with five participants. Interestingly, they were architects working as artists like me, designers, or urbanists. The diverse backgrounds of the participants promised to enrich the workshop with various perspectives and ideas. For the first time, all participants sent pictures. (See Appendices E: Figure 19) I also got some responses from Google from the follow-up urban mapping workshop.

Throughout the collective mapping session, Mitchel and Viviana expressed surprise at the absence of fountains in the area. They discussed how the sound of water could be used to mask the noise of urban traffic, and this concept of masking deeply resonated with me. Since that day, I have been reflecting on how I have personally used work or other distractions to conceal my emotional vulnerabilities. The insights from that day's discussions have stayed with me, provoking profound contemplation about our surroundings and coping mechanisms. I elaborate on this in Chapter VI.

### ***Communal Interest and Learning***

The group consisted of people from mixed backgrounds in the three sessions, leading to a profound, engaging conversation that yielded numerous new insights. The diverse perspectives and expertise brought by each participant enriched our discussions, contributing to a holistic understanding of Griffintown and enhancing the collaborative spirit of the workshop.

The three sessions generated insightful discussions and creative reflections from the participants, who were actively engaged with Griffintown's history, present, and potential future. The following key themes emerged from the workshop activity: the importance of conserving

Griffintown's cultural heritage and interest in exploring historical sites; the idea of socially engaged art and community; and transformative urban development.

Participants emphasized the importance of conserving Griffintown's cultural heritage and interest in exploring historical sites. Mariana's response aligns with this theme: "There are many valuable sites worth preserving. I understand the necessary changes for housing in the neighbourhood, but history is key." She acknowledges the importance of preserving valuable historical sites in Griffintown despite the necessary changes for housing. Her appreciation for the historical context shows a concern for protecting the neighbourhood's cultural heritage. Victoria, Denise, and Alejandrina's response also reflects this theme by expressing her interest in learning about the history of the Irish and Indigenous communities before colonization. Their desire to visit historical sites like the Horse Palace and learn about the industrial past demonstrated an eagerness to explore Griffintown's rich history.

Another aspect was the concept of socially engaged art, which resonated with participants and sparked discussions on community-focused art initiatives. Viviana's registration comment: "Learning about initiatives, or thoughts on Socially Engaged Art," indicates an interest in art that engages with the community and addresses social issues, aligning with this theme. Another aspect was how participants embraced the art of observing and documenting spaces. They recognized the importance of keen observations in informing their learning and ideas for Griffintown's future. Their active participation in the collective mapping workshop highlighted the value of involving the community in shaping conversations about the future of communities.

**Transformative Urban Development:** Participants envisioned urban development prioritizing community well-being and inclusivity. A particular focus was on creative ideas for the Horse Palace

land's future. Based on Théo's feedback, the workshop can specifically focus on imagining possibilities for the Horse Palace Land: “It would be nice to have a presentation about the evolution and history of the Horse Palace Land,” and added some speculative ideas.

The three sessions of the urban mapping workshop provided a platform for meaningful dialogue, creative exploration, and community-driven visions of Griffintown's future. The participants' intergenerational and different backgrounds as students, engineers, architects, artists, designers, and urbanists enriched the discussions, engaging a more inclusive and collaborative approach to imagining alternative futures.

### ***Formative Analysis of the Second Intervention:***

The formative analysis of the second intervention, the Urban Mapping workshop, involved a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis to evaluate various variables crucial for its implementation. I analyzed these principal variables for evaluation: community recruitment outreach, participant engagement, and participant output.

The strengths of this intervention include the choice of venue: Fonderie Darling, which is embedded in a rich historical context. The institution's support was pivotal in fostering a conducive environment for the workshop. Engaging participants further strengthened the initiative, and my established network within the community contributed to a collaborative atmosphere. The workshop coincided with a beautiful day, enhancing the overall experience. However, I identified weaknesses in the recruitment process, characterized by an unclear number of participants and a lack of background information about them. The uncertainty of who is going to show up and how to prepare

oneself for the group is typical in a community workshop. However, it makes a significant difference from my background in institutional teaching.

In assessing opportunities, the intervention capitalized on the community's interest in Griffintown's future, public art, and ongoing projects. The central location of Place Publique at the Fonderie Darling and the potential impact of the Bernard-Landry REM station construction<sup>62</sup> Presented favourable circumstances for the workshop's success. On the flip side, threats were less explicit, requiring continued attention and adaptability to unforeseen challenges in the dynamic urban landscape. The unpredictable number of participants and their varying levels of engagement remained a potential threat that needed careful navigation for a successful workshop outcome.

Formative evaluations allowed progressive refinements from one intervention to another (Collins et al., 2004). The comparative analysis between the first and second interventions reveals notable distinctions in their approaches. The first intervention was characterized by a less structured and more informal setting, with a significant amount of talking by the facilitator. In contrast, the second intervention markedly shifted towards increased planning and structure. I adopted a more prepared approach, with stages, and incorporating active listening and fostering active participant conversation, leading to a more animated and engaging workshop environment.

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<sup>62</sup> The construction of the REM train station in Griffintown has sparked mixed reactions among residents. Some are enthusiastic about the potential for improved connectivity and economic growth, while others express concerns about the noise and disruptions caused by the ongoing work. While the project promises long-term benefits, it presents short-term challenges for those living nearby. The balance between progress and the difficulties of navigating these changes has become a focal point for ongoing conversations in the community. The tension between these two perspectives remains a key aspect of local discussions.

More info project Griffintown–Bernard-Landry REM station <https://rem.info/en/works-info/griffintown>  
<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/griffintown-bernard-landry-rem-station-on-track-for-end-of-2023>

During the first intervention, the informal nature may have contributed to a surplus of facilitator-driven dialogue, potentially limiting participant involvement. In the second intervention, I strategically addressed this issue by adopting a structured format that encouraged less talking by me, the facilitator, allowing for increased participant engagement. The emphasis on active listening further facilitated a more inclusive and participatory atmosphere, leading to numerous valuable outcomes. This comparative analysis highlights the evolution from an informal, talk-centric model to a structured, participant-driven approach, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the intervention. By contemplating my actions and different responses, I could continue developing strategies for reaching out to the community and engaging the participants.

### ***CARE as the first approximation to coding: The web page***

The web page was my first approximation to coding. After I collected the data, I felt overwhelmed by how to begin coding. In my case, organizing the information to be shared online helped me do it. By presenting the information in a structured manner, I made the coding task more manageable and approachable. I established that the criteria were to capture each participant's feelings and desires and share something on the website.

I designed a visual mood board for participant responses on the web page to effectively showcase their diverse emotions and experiences. This engaging format makes the feedback more accessible and relatable, highlights the community's collective voice, and enhances the web page's visual appeal. This approach not only makes the data but also the visual format enhances the aesthetic appeal of the web page (see Figure 18).

My idea of the online sharing of the process and results of each intervention was igniting and motivating the ongoing conversation among the participants. I recognized the following themes: - Primary themes: History and Urban Context," "Community and Social Interaction," "Vision for Griffintown's Future, and "Discovering and Appreciating Neighbourhood History". Participants expressed gaining insights into the historic and industrial past of Griffintown; Victoria: "There is a lot of history in Griffintown that the residents are unaware of due to the new constructions which ignore the Irish background."<sup>63</sup>Participants expressed a desire to continue exploring and learning about the neighbourhood's rich history and highlighted the importance of the hidden historical details that residents may not be aware of due to new constructions.

-Urban Design and Public Spaces: Discussions centred around the significance of urban design and its integration with cultural aspects and collective experiences. Denise: "It is remarkable how urban design (sometimes) strives to integrate/maintain certain aspects of culture and intentionally generate collective experiences. Thinking about spaces and how we move through public spaces, it was nice to have the opportunity to ponder what I might want to see within some of the spaces we walked through."<sup>64</sup>Participants also reflected on their experiences and thoughts regarding the design of public spaces in Griffintown. Consideration was given to what participants would like to see within specific spaces in the neighbourhood.

-Community Building and Engagement: Participants recognized the value of connecting with others and reflecting on community insights during the workshop. Jose Andres: "There are many unique

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<sup>63</sup> (V. Aponte, personal communication, June 12, 2023), the participants' comments were gathered in a Google form.

<sup>64</sup> (D. Olivares, personal communication, May 26, 2023), participants' comments gathered in Google form.

details in our neighbourhood that we don't notice daily, such as its history, landmark buildings, and art. We as a community should do a better job of highlighting them and try to build community through them.”<sup>65</sup> The workshop was an opportunity to build a network of attentive, conscious people who care about the community. The participants shared ideas on how the community can come together to highlight unique neighbourhood features and foster a sense of community through them.

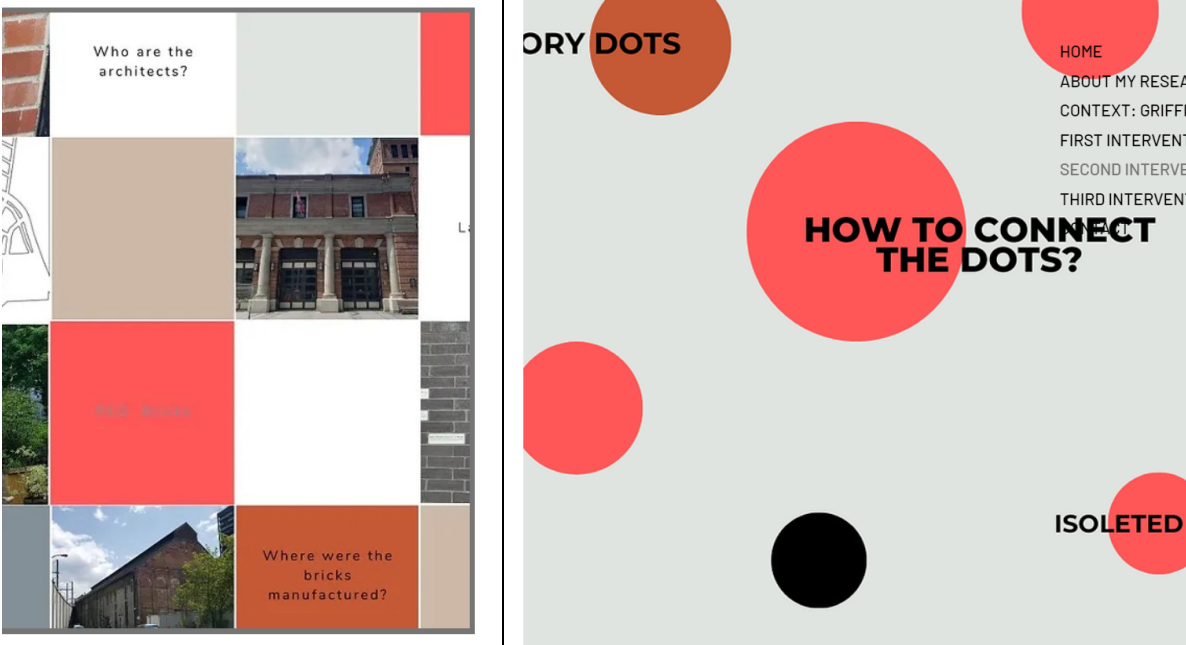
-Balancing Development and Preservation: Discussions revolved around the rapid development of Griffintown, with condominiums appearing in various areas. Carlos said, "While Griffintown is developing quickly with condos on every corner, there already exists a rich neighbourhood history. The vision for the future of Griffintown requires a collective examination of its past, with an eye on the current mishandlings.”<sup>66</sup> Participants expressed the need for a collective examination of the neighbourhood's past to inform its future development. Concerns were raised regarding the potential mishandling of the neighbourhood's history and heritage amidst ongoing changes.

**Figure 18**  
*Urban mapping participants' infographics outcomes*

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<sup>65</sup> (JA. Hernandez, personal communication, May 15, 2023), the participants' comments were gathered in a Google form.

<sup>66</sup> (C. Chacin, personal communication, May 17, 2023), the participants' comments were gathered in a Google form.



Curatorial mood boards on the web page CARE, (Suzane and Jose Antonio mood boards). Source: E. Zavarce (2023)

### ***The Second Intervention and the Sense of Place***

Josep Muntañola, in his book “*Topogenesis uno. (ensayo sobre el cuerpo y la arquitectura)* (Muntañola, 1979) argues that we appropriate places or architecture from our physical-social identity. In this book, the author describes the importance of identity and its essential correlation between the solidarity of identity and the appropriation of place. He uses ‘appropriation’ of the place as a notion associated with the sense of place.

In the urban mapping workshop, multiple identities were dialogued with the public space. Their dialectics contributed to a better understanding of complex human identities. The practice encouraged workshop participants to explore the site organically and consider diverse perspectives to gain a holistic understanding. It involved intelligently unfolding new realities from existing constraints, considering the complex relationships and interactions within a given context. Although these practices require more hours of workshops with participants, they have been proven successful

in design and architecture pedagogical settings (they are handy for comprehensive Analysis, Strategic Design, and understanding the complexities of the interconnectedness of urban systems). Prompting participants to envision the future of their surroundings, the mapping exercise became a platform for proposing innovative ideas and reimagining the potential of the areas under consideration. This progression naturally led me to contemplate future mapping exercises, with a specific focus on how the subjectivity of migrants might be harnessed and developed as a distinctive mode of thinking space.

The practice could encourage workshop participants to adopt a 'drift' <sup>67</sup>mindset, exploring the site organically and considering diverse perspectives to gain a holistic understanding. I am interested in further developing this interplay for future urban mapping workshops. In this sense, I am interested in exploring the emancipatory potential of Corner's (1999) innovative mapping practices. The author's four key mapping approaches: 'drift,' 'layering,' 'game-board,' and 'rhizome.', will help me develop the idea of mapping further as a practice of relational reasoning and affective connection.

### ***Urban Mapping and Reclaiming the city.***

Art-based action Research (ABAR) has been a valuable methodology for facilitating socially engaged art (SEA) and achieving dialogic forms of co-constructive learning with participants. The

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<sup>67</sup> (as proposed by Corner, driven from the *dérive* of Debord (1956). The concept of the *dérive*, introduced by Guy Debord, is detailed in his essay "Theory of the *Dérive*," initially published in 1956 and later included in the Situationist International journal in 1958. The *dérive* is a psychogeographical practice involving spontaneous, unstructured explorations of urban environments to experience the city spaces' emotional and psychological effects.

combined approach resulted in mixed methods and artistic practices with action research methodologies and fostered collaborative learning.

SEA and urban mapping provided an opportunity to connect with the community more deeply. They created a space for dialogue among participants. It facilitated the exchange of ideas. It fostered dialogue, questioning, and exploration of different perspectives and experiences. Through urban mapping, community members actively contributed their knowledge, experiences, and ideas, fostering meaningful conversations about the environment. One key outcome of the intervention was a sense of empowerment and involvement. Participants felt ownership and agency, which led to increased engagement.

The urban scenography framework and deep mapping were invitations to work with situated methods for engaging with the spatial politics of urban changes, focusing on Griffintown's discursive, social, material, and cultural specificities (Janssen, 2019). Urban mapping raised awareness about social and environmental issues. Visually representing these aspects prompted discussions, challenged assumptions, and inspired action.

Participant observation allowed me to observe the participants all day and see how they felt comfortable. They were encouraged to listen and share their impressions of Griffintown and Fonderie Darling. The workshop was structured into three segments outlined in the prompt activator: the meeting, the tour, and the collective mapping. During the third segment on both days, participants were encouraged to contemplate the future of Griffintown. I was particularly impressed by the intriguing proposals for urban transformation and alternative development paths that emerged from the discussions. At times, I even mentioned that these ideas would be relevant to my upcoming third

intervention. After careful analysis, I realized that launching my third intervention was necessary to incorporate these ideas and inspire participation in the art call.

In this Urban Mapping workshop, the focus extended beyond the tangible outcomes of mapping exercises to the nuanced dynamics of collective thinking and storytelling. With the energy I felt from this communal experience, I could not wait to see what the intervention would unfold. What participants were going to show me what I was going to learn? With emotion and incertitude, I proceeded to prepare for the subsequent intervention. The next chapter will examine the third intervention: The art/Design call ( Figure 19, Figure 20).

**Figure 19**  
*Composite of images of the Urban mapping workshop.*



Site: in front of Fonderie Darling, May 2023. Source Alejandrina Hernandez 2023

**Figure 20**  
*Image of Urban Mapping workshop.*



Urban Mapping workshop held on 8th June at the Horse Palace land. Photo Alejandrina Hernandez 2023.

V



*Disrumpere. E.Zavarce 2022*

## CHAPTER V | THIRD INTERVENTION, DISRUPTION; THE ART/ DESIGN CALL

*Virtual and in-person*

Activating Disruption through Art and Design

### ***Introduction***

After successfully implementing the first two SEA interventions within the ABAR methodological framework, I transitioned to preparing for the third intervention. The proposition for this phase was an art/design call intended to stimulate conversation and ignite the imagination.

Framed as a creative focal point, my assumption for this intervention was to use an art/design call to initiate and encourage dialogue among individuals and communities. My primary goal was to ignite the participants' imagination, a place of engagement and creative thinking. I proposed an approach that prompts conversation and nurtures creativity, community engagement, and innovative thinking. By incorporating an art/design call into my research, I aimed to create an innovative and inclusive platform for exploring and addressing various topics and challenges.

From my background, art/design calls were similar to the design process, where a creative focus is established to guide the development of ideas and solutions. Also, I had much transformative participation in these experiences, which were a leap forward in my artistic exploration and inspired me to initiate some projects related to an open call and collective.

In this chapter, I revisit my background and recall some of these experiences. At the same time, I reflect on the importance of this kind of event in motivating the artistic stimulus and the circumstances, procedures, and results of the Art/Design call. Furthermore, I will discuss Disruption

participation, the online exhibition, the proposed themes, and the contribution to learning how to develop a sense of community and place throughout SEA.<sup>68</sup>

### ***Background: Related Art Practices***

I did not have a formal education in art. I studied architecture, but in parallel, I took many art courses that helped me connect with artists in my home city, Maracaibo. We motivated each other to participate in art salons and calls throughout the year. Usually, those opportunities propelled us to explore themes, experiment with new material, and develop critical thinking.

I especially appreciate the example and experience I gained with the art theme call of Ricardo Benaim's projects like “*Un marco por la Tierra*” (1992-1999), “*Proyecto MAPA*” (from 1996-active); “*Banco Central del Cóndor*” (from 1999 - active); which afforded me with expanded opportunities to participate in significant exhibitions with artists all over Venezuela. Even during the pandemic, Benaim reached out again and invited artists worldwide to participate in “*Antes, Durante, Despues*” (2020), helping connect artists and ignite a creative conversation. In terms of community art projects, Clemencia Lambin and *Velada Santa Lucia* in the famous historical town in my home city propelled an inclusive and dynamic event of art and community from 2001 to 2013.<sup>69</sup> Captivated by postmodern ideas in art in 1999, including diversity, boundary-blurring, cultural

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<sup>68</sup> In this chapter, I name my participants by name and last name; in my third intervention, I decided to treat them as artists, authors, and designers. Instead, I used just the first name in the first and second interventions.

<sup>69</sup> <https://clemencialabin.com/>; [https://clemencialabin.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2008\\_lope\\_gutierrez\\_luis\\_newspaper\\_el\\_nacional.pdf](https://clemencialabin.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2008_lope_gutierrez_luis_newspaper_el_nacional.pdf)

hybridity, and pluralism, Peñaranda<sup>70</sup> and I launched *Ene Incidentes* (1999-2014)<sup>71</sup>, at the beginning of the millennium. Plurality and a questioned attitude toward institutions were delineated, and a collective project action unfolded. Throughout this collective art project, initially, we emphasized structured planning and adherence to timelines, but it evolved into a profound learning journey. I learned about the challenges of managing long-term projects amid institutional crises, highlighting the importance of flexibility and adaptability in creative endeavours. This experience underscored the necessity of resilience and the integration of external complexities into the artistic process, shaping my understanding of managing collective art projects effectively within defined frameworks.

These experiences have influenced my understanding and approach to socially engaged art, as I mentioned in Chapter I. As I moved forward with the third intervention of my dissertation research,

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<sup>70</sup> I introduced Lourdes Peñaranda in the first chapter; she is a multidisciplinary artist-researcher and former professor at Zulia University. <https://www.lourdespenarandaestudio.com/>

<sup>71</sup> The initial plan and conceptualization played a crucial role in guiding *Ene Incidentes* (1999-2014) to maintain a cohesive theme and meet the objectives of its 10th edition. Initially, prioritizing a well-structured plan with adherence to timelines was significant, reflecting the desire for the organization to manage a collective art project over a decade. However, this approach evolved into a profound learning experience, unveiling the complexity of managing such projects, particularly in a country experiencing institutional crises. The challenges magnified the importance of flexibility and adaptability in navigating uncertainties inherent in the creative process. The project became a reflection of artistic exploration and the socio-political landscape, emphasizing the need for resilience in the face of challenges and the ability to integrate the complexities of the external environment into the creative journey.

Conversely, it evolved into a profound learning experience about managing the complexities of such projects, navigating uncertainty, and cultivating flexibility. I came to understand that these aspects were integral to the essence of executing an art project collectively and within a defined frame.

*Ene Incidentes* (1999-2014) emerged as a collective with a shared sensibility challenging institutional conservatism, marking the initial convergence. Objects, actions, and subjects transcended the critique of conservatism and the thematic proposals of the decade, offering visions on societal representations. The project asserted that each thematic proposal over the ten years served as the origin and context for developing reflective visions in artistic and disciplinary design work, encompassing verbal and non-verbal communication. The themes defined each edition, adapting fortuitously to diachronic and synchronic circumstances. Throughout the 14 years of the project, many things happened in the country, from an optimistic country at the beginning of a new millennium to a country where the word crisis was not enough. Most artists who accompanied us in the first years migrated, and then in the last years, too.

I also remembered how the project *Cuerpo en Cuestión (Body in Question)*<sup>72</sup>, initiated in 2018, by Machado, Molero and myself.<sup>73</sup> The project taught me the importance of collaborative synergy and the power of fostering human connections through art. By curating diverse projects and emphasizing the shared creative process, we created a space where artists could deeply engage with themes and contribute meaningfully to a sense of community.

Building on this foundation, the *Cuerpos confinados (Confined Bodies)*<sup>74</sup> Project in 2020 further illuminated the potential of art to transcend physical barriers and foster resilience in times of crisis. We brought together artists worldwide through a virtual platform, turning isolation into an opportunity for global dialogue and collaboration. This experience reinforced the transformative role of art in creating interconnected virtual communities and highlighted the capacity of technology to bridge geographical distances for meaningful engagement and exchange.

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<sup>72</sup> Body in Question:" In 2018, I initiated the art project "*Cuerpo en Cuestión*" (Body in Question), as mentioned in Chapter I. Seeking to recreate the collaborative synergy of Ene Incidentes, I invited two friends to engage in a reflective process and mutually support creative development. Inspired by Neydalid Molero's book *Identidades corporales alternativas*<sup>72</sup>. We structured the project with three stages for sharing thoughts, reflections, and art proposals. We curated a list of artists, particularly those whose work resonated with the chosen themes. The emphasis was on fostering human connections and sharing the creative process rather than solely presenting the artists' works in a museum setting. In March 2018, we unveiled the exhibition at the Zulia Contemporary Art Museum (Maczul), featuring 18 projects by 15 artists. The diverse mediums and themes showcased in the projects were distinct yet deeply personal, each closely aligned with the individual artist's research.

<sup>73</sup> The curators: Machado, Maria Veronica, Molero, Neydalid and Zavarce, Elsy

<sup>74</sup> *Cuerpos Confinados (2020)* So, we continued with the search for how artistic dialogue could contribute to building a sense of community. At the onset of the 2020 lockdown, I reconnected with my two friends, Neydalid and Maria Veronica, this time in a virtual space. Despite being in different locations—Canada, Argentina, and Colombia—we resumed our conversation, contemplating our positions as migrants amidst the global pandemic and lockdown. We launched a virtual art call: *Confined Bodies / Cuerpos confinados*. Over 100 artists from approximately 80 countries responded to the call between April and May 2020. "Confined Bodies" became a platform for a virtual dialogue, creating space for reflection on the uncertainties of the pandemic and fostering resilience among the participants. In our recent article published in the special issue "Experiences in Distance and Isolation: Art Stories from the Pandemic" of the Journal of Art Education J, titled "Art as a Transformative Collaboration: A Journal of Vital Encounters to Create the Virtual Exhibition Confined Bodies," we shared our insights and experiences.

These experiences inspired my perspective as an artist actively engaged in transformative social art forms by navigating challenges in managing long-term art projects within a shifting socio-political landscape. These experiences highlight the importance of adaptability, resilience, and art's potential to address societal issues, healing and transformation. They have propelled me to seek innovative approaches, fostering dialogue, amplifying marginalized voices, and catalyzing positive change within communities through artistic interventions.

### ***Beyond the Sum of Individualities: An Art/Design Call as Activator-Activism***

Reflecting on the collective projects I have participated in has evoked a profound connection to a different approach to art. Authors like Guédez (1999) illuminate the nuanced conceptual shifts among avant-garde, trans-avant-garde, and meta-avant-garde, delineating a change in attitude toward the creative processes. According to Guédez (1999), this shift distances itself from the renovating and occasionally reactionary spirit of historical avant-gardes. Instead, it embodies a renewed action and a broad, integrative vision that transcends individualities akin to activism. The term "activism" invokes the spirit of philosopher Hannah Arendt's reflections and critique of modern scientific-technological reasoning. This perspective aligns with an attitude assumed by artists that goes beyond mere individual expression, embracing a collective and transformative vision within art.

In a historical review from ancient Greece to modernity, Hannah Arendt categorizes human activities into three distinct classes: labor, work, and action (Arendt, 1958). Labor encompasses manual, repetitive activities tied to instrumentalization, while work involves producing and consuming tools reliant on labor. The third category, action, pertains to political acts involving words and deeds. Arendt critiques labor activities for their subjection to necessity and futility, marking a

shift from the predominant action in ancient Greece to the rise of *homo faber* from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age (Comesaña-Santelices, 1999). This shift, a characteristic feature of modernity, prioritizes the characteristics of manufacture, emphasizing the precedence of making, process and development notions, productivity, creativity, and the reliability of crafted products (Comesaña-Santelices, 1999).

Traditionally associated with *labor* and *faber*, art involves manual activity and object manufacture. However, post-modernity has witnessed art proposals that transcend object paradigms (Pérez Oramas, 1996). In the context of socially engaged art, I see artists as initiators, provocateurs, and enablers of interactions. Beyond individual expression, contemporary artists utilize strategies to foster mobilization and collective participation in art.

In the SEA scene, artists defy the principle of causality, embracing strategies and art projects that pluralize, create, and establish spaces for enunciation. These actions become life acts in the polis, aligning with Arendt's notion of active life as the most human. The social impact of art through public pedagogies emphasizes the importance of public actions that contribute to the growth of freedom and plurality in collective engagement -- as theorized by Biesta (2014) and Arendt (1958). As I mentioned in my earlier discussion of Biesta's (2014) theorizing, public pedagogy is not merely about engaging with the public but is centred on actions that foster freedom and plurality in collective endeavours; he also argued about the "pedagogy of demonstration" (p.23). This aligns with Arendt's idea of action in the public realm, emphasizing continuous restart and the appearance of freedom.

Therefore, contemplating the journey that brought me to this moment is not just a response to a country amid global turbulence; it represents an approach to art as a lens through which to perceive

the world. This perspective not only prompts a re-evaluation of our surroundings but also invites us to empower the vision of alternative futures. It calls for active engagement in creating art transcending traditional boundaries, urging us to shape a dynamic and transformative artistic landscape actively. In navigating the complexities of our times, art emerges not merely as a reflection but as a catalyst for envisioning and actively participating in a more vibrant and pluralistic future.

### ***The Emergence of Disruption of the Art/Design Call:***

In my research proposal, an art/call was planned for the third intervention. However, how should I define it? How do I proceed to launch it?

The idea for the art/design call was to catalyze conversation, instigate discussions among participants, act as a source of inspiration, and encourage them to tap into their creativity and imagination. The call aimed to provide a clear focus for participants to engage in critical thinking, emphasizing the importance of involving the community and encouraging agency, ultimately contributing to a rich and diverse cultural exchange.

During the second intervention, the participants became genuinely enthusiastic and started sharing captivating ideas about the future of Griffintown. These ideas struck me as valuable additions to my upcoming third intervention. After carefully evaluating the outcome of the second intervention, I decided to launch the third intervention, which, in my research proposal, took the form of an art/design call. I wanted to encourage participants to translate their learning and insights into concrete art projects, actions, and interventions that address context issues in Griffintown, specifically Rue Ottawa and the Horse Place Land. I aimed to connect artistic practices with social action and place-making.

The name "Disruption" emerged from one of the notes the participants (Denise) provided during the urban mapping workshop. I was drawn to this name because of its significance, catchy sound, and suitability in English. In some French contexts, it is used as an anglicism. "Disruption"<sup>75</sup> is a busy word that fosters alternative futures, provoking, fostering, exploring, engaging, reflecting, and creating. In this sense, I was relating to a significant shift or interruption in the usual course of events using the term provoking thought and change; by using this name, I aimed to provoke and inspire participants to challenge conventional norms and ideas. Also, fostering creativity and bold ideas: "Disruption" implied breaking away from the ordinary and embracing new, audacious concepts. In the context of an urban mapping workshop, the name "Disruption" could allude to exploring the potential for transformation in the urban landscape. I used it to prompt participants to envision alternative urban futures and challenge existing urban structures, seeking to create more vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable communities. "Disruption" is a powerful term that can stir emotions and grab attention. In some cases, "disruption" has become a buzzword associated with technological advancements and rapid societal changes. Choosing this name for the art/design call could align it with contemporary trends, emphasizing its relevance in today's fast-paced world and creating contrast and reaction.

Ultimately, the name "Disruption" served as a strategic choice to convey the overarching theme and intentions of the art/design call. It captured attention, sparked curiosity, and communicated a desire for forward-thinking, transformative ideas that can reshape perceptions,

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<sup>75</sup> The word "disruption" in French is typically translated as "perturbation" or "interruption," depending on the context. However, "disruption" is also directly used in French as an anglicism, particularly in business and technology contexts, to refer to innovative change or upheaval.

spaces, and experiences. Disruption sets the tone for an innovative, poetic, sensitive, and explorative approach that challenges the present circumstances. It signals that the art/design call encouraged participants to think boldly, take risks, and propose unconventional ideas that have the potential to make a substantial impact, unconventional approaches.

***Process of Art-Design Making: The Launch of Disruption Art/Design Call:***

Applying ABAR iterative cycles of Investigation/Design, Making actions/Artwork, Observing/Documenting, and Reflecting/Evaluating, I proceeded with the third intervention SEA artmaking plan. After obtaining ethical approval through a second amendment to my original protocol (for Intervention 1), I initiated the Art/Design call in June 2023, intending to keep the invitation open until October. Early on, some potential participants inquired about the mapping aspect and whether there would be more. In response, I offered informal walking tours around Griffintown, organized meetings with friends and artists at Fonderie Darling, strolled Ottawa Street, and dedicated time to exploring the Horse Palace Land.

This initiative lasted from the summer solstice until the end of fall, making my summer and fall exceptionally busy with numerous encounters, gatherings, and conversations. Each dialogue revealed diverse perspectives, presenting new learning opportunities. Each proposal introduced a unique path and journey of discovery. These encounters, conversations, and proposals have left an indelible imprint, and their unfolding will be revealed in this chapter.

The launch of the Disruption Art/Design call marked a pivotal moment that sparked a series of strategic decisions and creative endeavours. Beyond defining the name, careful consideration was

required to convey the essence of disruption through visual elements, digital platforms, and promotional materials.

Creating a compelling visual identity involved more than aesthetics; it was about encapsulating the spirit of disruption, innovation, and artistic exploration. This visual identity extended to the design of the website, which not only served as a portal for submissions and a virtual space that embodied the ethos of the call (Arendt, 1995; Biesta, 2014; Inayatullah, 2013). (see invitation poster: Figure 60).

Using a Google form streamlined the submission process, making it accessible and user-friendly for potential participants. Meanwhile, the promotional posts played a crucial role in generating interest and excitement, capturing the attention of both established artists and emerging talents.

However, the launch's true success was not immediate. It required patience, active engagement, and a multifaceted approach to outreach. This involved waiting for responses, actively listening to the community, and sharing updates and insights in person and through various social media channels. This active engagement built a foundation of trust among potential participants, piqued curiosity about the call's objectives and themes, and presented a challenge that resonated with artists wanting to push boundaries and explore new territories within their practice. Ultimately, this engagement process served as a bridge of connection, bringing together a diverse and dynamic group of participants whose proposals reflected a broad spectrum of perspectives, ideas, and creative responses to the theme of disruption.

### ***Curating Disruption Online Exhibition***

Curating the Disruption online exhibition involved several vital decisions and creative processes that contributed to its success. One crucial aspect was the concept of "active waiting," which signifies proactive engagement and reflection during the period of anticipation for responses. During this waiting period, I decided to include illustrations in the exhibition. This decision arose from encounters, conversations with potential participants, and evaluations of outreach strategies within various communities. These interactions and reflections formed the basis for a holistic approach to curating the exhibition, where the multifaceted aspects of research and creative expression intersected.

In August, amidst these activities, I embarked on a month-long digital illustration challenge. This challenge served as a channel to express my reflections, thoughts, research findings, and learning experiences from implementing the ABAR interventions. The illustrations were grouped into different themes, such as the Irish background of the neighbourhood, the Horse Palace, architectural features, and urban transformations.

I experimented with various techniques throughout the challenge, including photo collages, vibrant digital illustrations, and layering with my prints. Each illustration was a visual exploration, capturing layers of meaning and personal insights about the disruption and community engagement theme. I embraced illustration as a visual output and a transformative journey, drawing inspiration from Jane Bennett's insights on doodling. Like Bennett, I doodled and took notes whenever a pencil and paper were nearby. Bennett's last book, *Influx and Efflux* (2020) discusses her process, following Whitman's poetic insight, which embodies a continuous cycle of impression and expression, ingestion and excretion, immigration and emigration. For her, each doodle enacts a "peculiar experience of the self" (p.x), affirming the transformative nature of this creative act. The conjunction

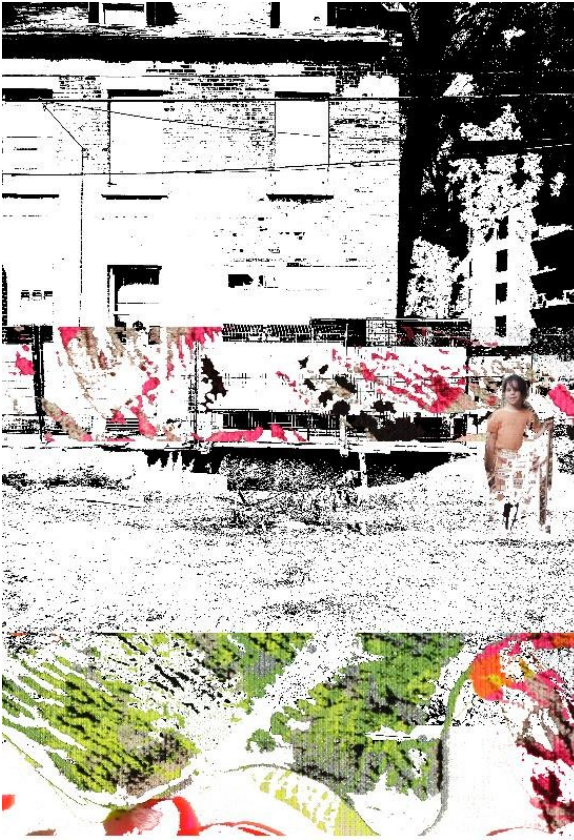
"and" in influx-and-efflux signifies to the author the crucial period of transformation, where ideas hover before manifesting into tangible forms.

One particular mindset that guided my illustration process was "Elsy exploring Ottawa's streets." Through these illustrations, I metaphorically assumed the role of an archeological explorer, unveiling a personal gaze of interconnectedness and affection within the urban landscape. An example of this approach can be seen in the illustration titled "Little Elsy at Ottawa," which encapsulates the essence of this exploratory and insightful journey. (see image in Figure 21 also see Figure 61). Overall, curating the Disruption online exhibition showcased artworks and integrated personal narratives, research insights, and creative expressions into a cohesive and engaging digital experience.<sup>76</sup>

**Figure 21**  
*"Little Elsy at Ottawa," Digital illustration.*

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<sup>76</sup> I invite you to visit the site at <https://elsyzavarce.editorx.io/disruptioncall/home> and <https://elsyzavarce.editorx.io/disruption-ii>



A digital collage composite of pictures of Ottawa street in 2022, prints done during the pandemic, a picture of little Elsy exploring “Rio Claro” during a typical Sunday family source: Serie: August daily prints, E. Zavarce 2023

***Synergy: interaction, reaching out, collaborating,***

Synergy, encompassing interaction, reaching out, and collaborating, played a crucial role in the process leading up to the launch of the online gallery. The waiting period was filled with anticipation and excitement, tinged with uncertainty about the responses and their nature. Despite this uncertainty, I remained attentive and responsive to the evolving process. Patience and attentive listening were indispensable during this phase. While I knew any responses would benefit my research, I was keen on maximizing their potential. It was a constant challenge to convey the complexity and multifaceted nature of the ABAR phase effectively.

**Figure 22**  
*Tracing the shadow of the Poplar tree*



Following the instructions, we gathered collectively, Collective Et al. and traced the shadow with the soil of the Poplar three of the Horse Palace Land. (in the picture: Jose Andres, Jose Antonio, Mari Carmen and Francisco) Photo: E. Zavarce, 2023.

During this time, I found resonance in my experiences as a design professor and my intuitive sensibilities as an artist. Additionally, my past studies in management theory during my postgraduate years and my practical experience working with artists contributed to an equilibrium—an active, reactive, and proactive attitude—all encapsulated within the ABAR methodology. This approach was vital in understanding the intricate dynamics of communities and human connections, leading to a synergy where the whole surpassed the sum of its parts.

The culmination of these efforts was the launch of the online gallery on a new website, which featured the first participant proposal.<sup>77</sup> This launch continued the conversation and engagement, further highlighting the disruptive and collaborative spirit of the ABAR interventions.

**Figure 23**

*Screen capture of online Gallery participation Disruption, Section I*

## PARTICIPATIONS



Lab Ideas: Gustavo's idea: an encounter



I LIVED THERE



Yesteryear's Repast



7 Capturas II / 7 CAPTURES II



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<sup>77</sup> Online gallery Disruption, first section: <https://elsyzavarce.wixstudio.com/disruptioncall>



In—build—between



Canadian Poplar



Reflejos que cuentan/  
Reflections that talk



Echar raíces le dicen / Put  
down roots they tell you.



GREEN POLES

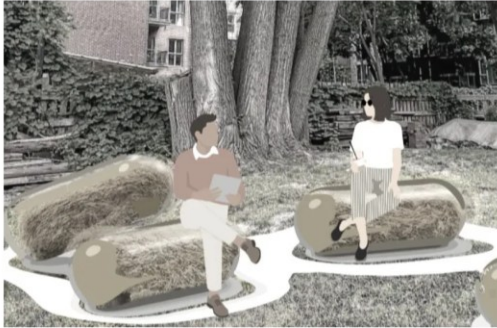


Source: E. Zavarce, screen capture of:  
<https://elsyzavarce.editorx.io/disruptioncall/projects>  
(2023)

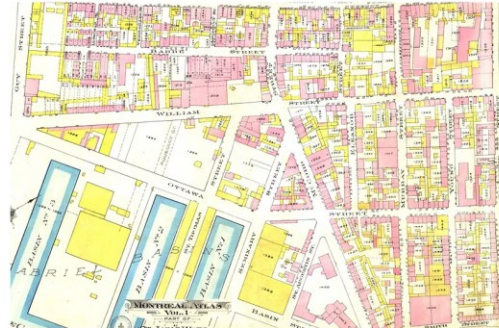
Figure 24

*Screen capture of online Gallery participation Disruption, Section II*

## PARTICIPATIONS



Harvesting Memories: a Time Capsule



Ghosting



"Terrain vague" series, No. 1  
and series, No. 2 (proposal)



Paisajes comunes / Common  
Landscapes





Hoofsteps Echoes: A Tender Tale of Griffintown.



Art Terrace



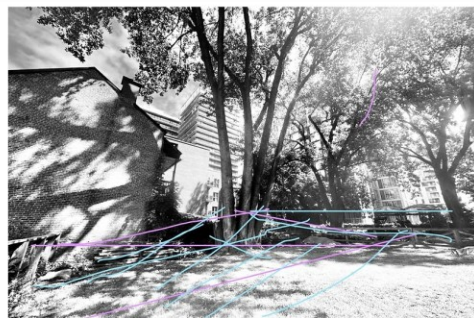
TRAN\$\$\$FORMATION



Poplar Tales



The passion of the carpenters, or all those places where I slept in Eleanor 311



S'entrelace / Entrelaza / Intertwines



Source E. Zavarce (2024), screens capture of: <https://elsyzavarce.editorx.io/disruption-ii/projects> (2024)

### ***Disruption art/ design call: The submissions***

The Disruption Art/Design call beckoned forth a myriad of creative expressions, each submission serving as a testament to the diverse narratives and artistic visions pulsating within the imaginaries of Griffintown. From tender testimonials to immersive site interventions, the submissions encapsulate the spirit of exploration and innovation. As I display this diverse gallery of proposals, I embarked on a journey through the multifaceted landscape of Disruption, where each artwork served as a vibrant thread, weaving together histories, imagination and possibilities of community.

I ended up organizing two websites for economic reasons.<sup>78</sup> I present the participants in chronological order in Table 3

**Table 3**  
*Disruption participation, approx. In chronological order*

#	Title	Media/ action	Participants
	<i>Disruption Web Page Section I</i>		
1	<i>I Lived There</i>	A Testimony	Natasha Doyon
2	<i>Canadian Poplar</i>	Site intervention Horse Palace Land, Griffintown.	Et al. Collective
3	<i>Green Pole</i>	a poem, video animation, and photography.	Alejandrina Hernández
4	<i>At Rue Ann. Journal of An Encounter.</i>	An encounter with Griffintown artists at Bev's studio	Gustavo's idea: with Gustavo Estrada, Margaret, and Bev at Bev's studio
5	<i>Yesteryear's Repast</i>	An immersive culinary encounter	Philomena Collective
6	<i>7 Capturas II / 7 Captures II</i>	CAPTURAS de palabras que emanan/ CAPTURES of words that emanate while wandering.	Alexis Pirela

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<sup>78</sup> I am using Editor X, a free platform that has limited storage for images and videos.

7	<i>Reflejos Que Cuentan/ Reflections That Talk-</i>	Photography and poems of her journey	Beatriz Lopez
8	<i>Echar Raíces Le Dicen / Put Down Roots, They Tell You.</i>	Interplay proposal with tiles collectively -	Mariana Sánchez-Hoyos-
9	<i>-In—Build—Between</i>	video and poem	Marguerite Marion-Reyes
	<i>Disruption, Web Page Section II</i>		
10	<i>S'entrelace / Entrelaza/ Intertwines.</i>	Workshop and action art-making call	Daniel Djuro-Goiricelaya
11	<i>Tran\$\$\$formation</i>	photography	Gustavo Galue
12	<i>La Passion De Los Carpinteros, O Todos Esos Lugares Donde Dormi En Eleanor 311/ The Passion of The Carpenters, Or All Those Places Where I Slept in Eleanor 311</i>	Video performance proposal	Armando Rivas
13	<i>Poplar Tales</i>	Sculpture for Place-making	Viviana Murillo-Morales
14	<i>Hoofsteps Echoes: A Tender Tale of Griffintown.</i>	collective listening performance	Lucine Serhan
15	<i>Paisajes Comunes / Common Landscapes</i>	Community art workshop/ Taller de arte comunitario	Lourdes Peñaranda
16	<i>Harvesting Memories: A Time Capsule</i>	Place-making ephemeral intervention	Alejandrina y Stefania Hernandez Zavarce
17	<i>Art Terrasse / Teraza</i>	Collaborative canvas	Patil Tchilinguirian and EZ
18	<i>Terrain Vague, Series No. 1 And Series No. 2 (Proposal)</i>	Public space intervention and performative photography	Denise Olivares
19	<i>Ghosting</i>	Mix media photo exploration	Jacky Lo

**Figure 25**

*Terrain Vague, Series No. 1 and Series No. 2*



Denise Olivares's performance proposal on Horse Palace Land. Photo: E. Zavarce 2023

### ***First Approximation, Insights from the Disruption Art/Design Call: Unveiling Diversity***

As I contemplated the rich array of submissions from the Disruption Art/Design call, I was struck by the profound variety of artistic/design expression in moulding our perception of place and identity. Through mediums ranging from poetry and photography to sculpture and immersive encounters, participants have unveiled a spectrum of possibilities that mirror the intricacies and liveliness of locales like Griffintown. Several noteworthy aspects emerge from our examination. The first is the interdisciplinary nature: The proposals span a spectrum of art forms, encompassing testimony, site intervention, poetry, photography, culinary encounters, video performance, and more. Community engagement: Many projects integrate community participation or engagement, aligning

with the principles of socially engaged art. Several participants propose facilitating workshops that intersect with community building and artistic expression.

Other aspects include the diversity of perspectives: The cohort of participants represents diverse backgrounds and viewpoints, enriching the Disruption art-design call. Witnessing engagement from the Latin art community, the Concordia Art Education community, new friends in Montreal, and longstanding friends residing beyond Canada's borders was significant. No less significant was the temporal dimensions: Several projects adopt ephemeral installations or performances, aligning with short-term artistic endeavours. From workshops to site interventions, the temporal aspect adds depth to exploring Griffintown's essence.

I continued my analysis considering the criteria Frasz and Sidford (2017, p.7) outlined in Chapter II, including considerations of aesthetics, the artist's role, origin, the definition of work, direction of influence, origination, place, issue, and duration. We can identify that about aesthetics: Notably, the roles of social aesthetics are prominent, with the artist often assuming the role of facilitator, like workshops, events, promoting encounters, and a few others. Secondly, the role of Fine Arts aesthetics with participation in pictures, poems, videos, and some site interventions.

The artists' origins extend beyond Griffintown, yet the works themselves are deeply rooted in community-generated narratives. The duration tends towards the short term, focusing on addressing issues pertinent to Griffintown through various artistic lenses. Place focus: Some works are non-site-specific, but all deal in some way with the place of Griffintown; some connect with the past, some with the present, and others with the future.

Regarding the definition of the works, I would argue that proposals related to workshops and events fall under both process-oriented categories. At the same time, submissions of photos, videos, and poems are inherently product oriented. Regarding the direction of influence, while the intentions and proposals revolve around Griffintown, the ideas can serve as exemplary models for other communities. Finally, concerning place, the submissions demonstrate a blend of place-specific and non-place-specific elements. In terms of duration, they tend to lean towards short-term engagements. The overarching issue addressed in all cases is Griffintown, with some approaches taking on a phenomenological perspective and others aligning with Socially Engaged Art (SEA) principles. However, others propose future site installations or workshops with ephemeral outcomes.

In sum, Frasz and Sidford's (2017) variables evidence that the Disruption Art/Design call has catalyzed a multifaceted exploration of Griffintown, inviting participants to delve into its layers and complexities while envisioning alternative futures and fostering communal dialogue.

### ***Second Approximation: Unveiling Threads. Insights into Griffintown's Possible Narratives***

After carefully considering the intentions, actions, and impact of participating in the third intervention, I identified common threads and categorized four groups from the Disruption art/design call proposals. These themes were further developed into four (4) curatorial themes for an in-person exhibition: Understanding urban spaces as cultural stages, Scenography, Perceptive experience approaches, Curatorial interventions in public spaces, and facilitating communal learning experiences. These themes have helped me explore and gain insights into the understanding of place, community, and envisioning futures. (see Table 4)

**Table 4**

*Summary of curatorial themes of Disruption, the third intervention.*

<b>a. Understanding urban spaces as cultural stage: scenography</b>	<i>I Lived There</i>	A Testimony	Natasha Doyon
	<i>At Rue Ann. Journal of an encounter.</i>	An encounter with Gustavo, Margaret, and Bev at Bev's studio	LAB IDEAS: Gustavo's Estrada
	<i>La pasión de los carpinteros, o todos esos lugares donde dormí en Eleanor 311/ The passion of the carpenters, or all those places where I slept in Eleanor 311</i>	Video performance proposal	Armando Rivas
	<i>Ghosting</i>	Mix media photo exploration of ghost tales	Jacky Lo
<b>b. Curatorial interventions in public spaces</b>	<i>Canadian Poplar</i>	Site intervention Horse Palace Land, Griffintown.	Et al. Collective
	<i>Poplar Tales</i>	Sculpture for Place-making	Viviana Murillo-Morales
	<i>Hoofsteps Echoes: A Tender Tale of Griffintown.</i>	Collective listening performance	Lucine Serhan
	<i>Harvesting Memories: A time capsule</i>	Place-making ephemeral intervention	Stefania and Alejandrina Hernandez Zavarce
	<i>Terrain vague, series No 1 and series No 2 (proposal)</i>	Public space intervention and performative photography	Denise Olivares
<b>c. The perceptive experiences approach</b>	<i>Green Pole</i>	a poem, video animation, and photography.	Alejandrina Hernández
	<i>7 Capturas / 7 Captures</i>	CAPTURAS de palabras que emanan/ CAPTURES of words that emanate while wandering.	Alexis Pirela
	<i>Reflejos que cuentan/ Reflections that talk-</i>	Photography and poems of her journey	Beatriz Lopez
	<i>In-Built-Between</i>	Video poem	Marguerite Marion-Reyes
	<i>Tran\$\$\$Formation</i>	photography	Gustavo Galue
<b>d. Facilitating communal learning experiences</b>	<i>Yesteryear's Repast</i>	An immersive culinary encounter	Philomena Collective

	<i>Echar raíces le dicen / Put down roots they tell you.</i>	Interplay with tiles collectively -	Mariana Sánchez-Hoyos
	<i>S'entrelace / Entrelaza/ intertwines.</i>	Workshop and action art-making call	Daniel Djuro-Goiricelaya
	<i>Art Terrasse / Terrasa</i>	Collaborative canvas	Patil Tchilinguirian and EZ
	<i>Paisajes comunes / Common Landscapes</i>	Community art workshop/ Taller de arte comunitario	Lourdes Peñaranda

Source: EZ 2024

#### ***a. Understanding urban spaces as a cultural stage: Scenography***

Informed by Claire Bishop's *Participation* (2012), I acknowledge cities as vibrant cultural stages where diverse communities converge. Through the Disruption participations, I have gained insights into what constitutes meaningful aspects and affinities in curating a sense of place and community (see Figure 26 ):

*I Lived There* is a testimonial by Natasha Doyon, an artist and Ph.D. student in art education. It recounts when she resided on Ottawa Street, surprisingly close to the Horse Palace land. She proposed a meeting to chat about my research, and as she began recounting a personal history from her past, she said, "Elsy, I lived there." "Where?" I replied. "In Griffintown, on Ottawa Street," she answered. We met again at the Horse Palace land, where she tried to pinpoint the exact location of her former residence. Our conversation revealed an intimate, intense, and humorous side of Natasha's life, showing me how different memories and meanings can be attached to the same place.

This aligns with Armando's proposal: *The Passion of the Carpenters, or all those places where I slept in Eleanor 311*. This is a video performance proposal by Armando Rivas, an artist from

Venezuela<sup>79</sup>. To my surprise, Armando lived on Eleanor Street, very close to Ottawa Street, during the winter of 2023. He worked in a shed where some friends performed construction work, a shed that was demolished a few months later. Based on his personal experience, his video proposal examines the themes of migration, Griffintown's transformation, and carpentry work. Expressing these personal stories of urban space through art helps humanize the experience of the urban place. I want to collaborate and bring this project to future realization.

Disruption art/design was also open to ideas; I called it LAB IDEAS. Gustavo's idea involved a meeting with Bev and Margaret, who knew of my interest in learning about Griffintown. Gustavo Estrada, an artist in Jewelry, came to Montreal from Honduras when he was seventeen (17) years old.<sup>80</sup> At Rue Ann, Journal of an Encounter was a meeting rich in anecdotes and stories from a family of entrepreneurs and artists who have shaped Griffintown since the 1950s. This close encounter with community activism protagonists, exploring corners of the building—a building that I observe and analyze daily—filled me with the energy and connections to investigate further.

*Ghosting* by Jacky Lo<sup>81</sup>, an artist and educator, Lo proposed a mixed-media photo exploration; Lo delves into the theme of "ghosting," inviting viewers to contemplate the ephemeral nature of memory and existence. In his project, Lo will invite audiences to explore the haunting

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<sup>79</sup> I met Armando when he was doing a course in Art education; he was studying studio artwork in Concordia.

<sup>80</sup> I met Gustavo in 2019 at the École des métiers du Sud-Ouest-de-Montréal in Saint Henry. he was my professor in the jewelry course for 3 years.

<sup>81</sup> I met Jacky when he was doing his master's in art education at Concordia. He is second generation Chinese and lived in Vancouver.

imagery of Griffintown Urban stories, reflecting on the fleeting nature of human presence, the traces we leave behind in the physical world, and the emotional resonance of absence and loss.

**Figure 26**

*Composite of Disruption group: Urban spaces as cultural stage: Scenography.*



1



2



3.



4.

1. *I Lived There* is a testimonial, Natasha Doyon, 2. *At Rue Ann, Journal of An Encounter* Gustavo's idea, 3. *The Passion of the Carpenters, or all those places where I slept in Eleanor 311*, Armando's proposal, 4. *Ghosting* by Jacky Lo, 4. Source E. Zavarce, pictures of E. Zavarce (2023-24).

#### ***b. Curatorial interventions in public spaces:***

During the sixties and seventies, environmentalist artists initiated new perspectives in art by utilizing the landscape as a material for production, thereby imbuing it with fresh meaning and

significance (Peñaranda, 2013). Some of the submissions delve into concepts, such as the significance of experiencing urban landscapes (Lynch, 1964), the creation of creative and inclusive urban spaces (Soja, 2009), the symbolic (Bachelard, 2010), and the exploration of sensorial aspects (Pallasmaa, 2011). Those participants explored the potential of curatorial interventions in public spaces to transform the urban landscape: Site-specific art installations, interactive exhibitions, and site-performing and community art projects can reimagine public realms and foster civic engagement (see Figure 27).

The following proposals exemplify this approach: *Canadian Poplar Site* intervention by Et al. Collective aimed to activate the Horse Palace Land in Griffintown through a site-specific installation. The collective did a site intervention following instructions by engaging with the site's context, specifically the Poplar tree. In this sense, a meaningful and interactive experience was created on a Sunday morning, inviting us to reimagine the space, its values, and its potential. The Collective et al. gathered a group of mainly architects who started their friendship at the School of Architecture at Zulia University. (in the collective participated: Maricarmen Coello, Francisco Mavarez, José Antonio Hernández, Alejandrina Hernández, José Andrés Hernández, Elsy Zavarce, María Verónica Machado).

*Poplar Tales: Sculpture for Place-making* by Viviana Murillo<sup>82</sup>, an architect and artist: Murillo's project involves creating sculptural elements that contribute to place-making in Griffintown. By incorporating elements inspired by local history, culture, and natural environment,

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<sup>82</sup> I met Viviana in a workshop at Ada x. In those days, I participated in as many workshops in cultural venues in Montreal as I could to learn about methodologies and Montreal's cultural ecosystem.

the sculptures serve as focal points for community interaction and engagement, transforming the urban landscape into a dynamic and meaningful space.

*Hoof Steps Echoes: A Tender Tale of Griffintown* by Lucine Serhan<sup>83</sup>, a performer artist from Lebanon: Serhan's intervention proposal invites the community to engage with Griffintown's auditory landscape through a collective listening performance. By amplifying the neighbourhood's sounds and stories, the project fosters a deeper appreciation for its unique identity and heritage while encouraging active participation and reflection.

*Harvesting Memories: A Time Capsule* by the Hernandez Zavarce sisters, Stefania and Alejandrina, an architect and an industrial designer from Venezuela. Through the theme of a time capsule, this intervention serves as a placemaking ephemeral intervention, capturing and preserving the memories and stories of Griffintown's residents. The project creates a sense of collective identity and connection to the urban landscape by involving the community in imaging, harvesting, and documenting memories.

*Terrain Vague, Series No. 1 and Series No. 2* by Denise Olivares<sup>84</sup>, an artist and educator: Olivares' proposal combines public space intervention with performative photography, exploring the concept of "*terrain vague*" – a French phrase meaning waste ground in Griffintown<sup>85</sup>. The project

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<sup>83</sup> I met Lucien in one of my courses when she was doing her master's in art education.

<sup>84</sup> Denise migrated from Chile to Montreal when she was 4 years old. I met Denise in one of my courses when she was doing her master's in art education.

<sup>85</sup> Catalan architect and theorist Ignasi de Solà-Morales introduced the concept of *terrain vague* in his 1995 essay "Terrain Vague." This term describes urban spaces that are abandoned, obsolete, undefined, often neglected or in-between areas in a city. These spaces are characterized by their openness and potential, existing outside the conventional urban planning or architectural narrative.

highlights neglected or transitional spaces through temporary installations and photographic documentation, prompting viewers to reconsider their significance and potential within the urban fabric.

Curatorial interventions in public spaces are pivotal in transforming urban landscapes, reimagining public realms, and fostering civic engagement. These interventions demonstrate the potential of art to activate public spaces, engage communities, and reimagine the urban landscape as a dynamic and inclusive environment for collective expression and interaction. By facilitating meaningful encounters and dialogues, we can imagine how these projects could contribute to the neighbourhood's cultural vitality and social cohesion, fostering a sense of ownership and pride among its residents.

**Figure 27**

*Composite of Disruption proposals group: Curatorial interventions in public spaces*



1



2.



3.



4.



5.

In order of the picture sequence: 1. *Canadian Poplar* by Et al. Collective, 2.-*Poplar Tales* by Viviana Morillo, 3. *Harvesting Memories: A time capsule*, by Hernandez Zavarce sisters, *Hoofsteps Echoes: A Tender Tale of Griffintown*, Lucine Serhan, 5. *Terrain vague, series No. 1 and 2* (proposal), Denise Olivares. (Source E. Zavarce 2024, all Pictures E. Zavarce 2023, drawing 2: Viviana Murillo, black and white render 3: Alejandrina Hernandez, 2023).

### ***c. The perceptive experiences approach.***

During one of my meetings with Alexis, my former professor in architecture history, on Ottawa Street, she showed little interest in the historical or architectural aspects. Instead, she sought to immerse herself purely in the experience of the site. This surprised me, as I had found great joy discussing these aspects with participants during urban mapping sessions. However, during our second meeting, she reminisced about our time at the university and the phenomenological approach to space. Reflecting on my university days, the works of Pallasmaa (2011) and Bachelard (2010) helped us develop an understanding of space beyond its functional aspects. This approach emphasized and valued the richness of personal perceptions, emotions, and symbolic interpretations.

This made me realize a connection among participants who shared a subjective perspective and a desire to share their experiences. Reflecting on phenomenology theory gave me insights into artistic practice and reception's embodied, subjective, and experiential aspects. (Haraway,1995). In

the context of the Disruption proposal, this phenomenological approach involved examining participants' lived experiences and subjective perceptions, answering my question about the sense of place and community. (See Figure 29)

Like in *Green Pole* by Alejandrina Hernández, solo participation in the piece, which encompasses a poem, video animation, and photography, invites viewers to engage with the sensory, historical traces, and emotional dimensions of the reflection on the interconnectedness between human perception, the physical landscape, and the remaining of the past in the dynamic of fast changes of Griffintown.

*7 Capturas II / 7 Captures II* Alexis Pirela<sup>86</sup>, architect and professor from Venezuela: Focusing on capturing words that emanate during wandering, this artwork prompts viewers to immerse themselves in the artist's journey and interpret the poetic fragments captured. Through her poems, we can delve into the emotional and existential significance of these fleeting moments, contemplating our experiences of wandering *and introspection*.

*Reflejos que cuentan/ Reflections that talk* by Beatriz Lopez<sup>87</sup>, an artist and graphic designer: Through photography and poems documenting her journey, she offers viewers a glimpse into her subjective reality and inner reflections. Her exploration involves contemplating the interplay between external landscapes and internal states of mind, inviting audiences to resonate with the artist's narratives and explore their memories and emotions.

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<sup>86</sup> Alexis Pirela migrated to Montreal after retiring from Zulia University around 2002.

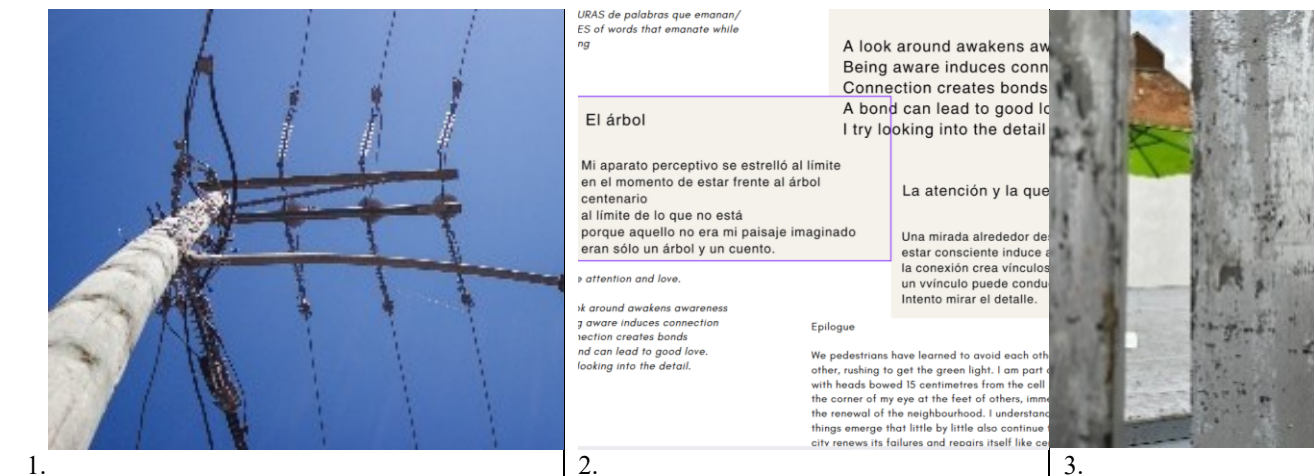
<sup>87</sup> I met Beatriz during the pandemic. She participated in an open call: "Antes, durante, despues," organized by Ricardo Benaim in 2020. I talk about it in Chapter VI

*In—Build—Between* by Marguerite Marion-Reyes<sup>88</sup>, an artist and educator: Her artwork, combining video and poetry, explores the liminal spaces between constructed environments. She invites viewers to immerse themselves in the interstitial spaces depicted, reflect on the fluid boundaries between rapid urban changes, and contemplate how these spaces shape our perceptual experiences and sense of place.

*Tran\$\$\$formation* by Gustavo Galue<sup>89</sup>, architect and photographer: Through photography, Galue captures moments of transformation, inviting viewers to reflect on the dynamic nature of urban environments and the passage of time. His work artwork involves engaging with the textures, colours, and atmospheres depicted, exploring the intersections between human activity and the ever-changing urban landscape, and considering how these transformations influence our lived experiences.

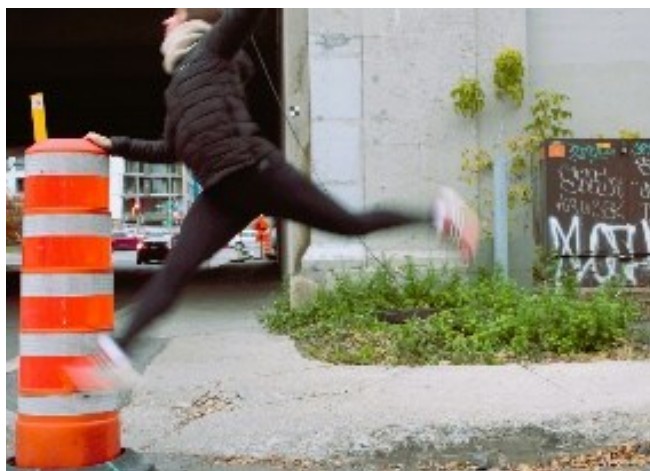
## Figure 28

*Composite of Disruption proposals group: The perceptive experiences approach*



<sup>88</sup> Margarite migrated from Chile. I met her at an event organized by the Art Education Grad Student Association.

<sup>89</sup> Gustavo came from Venezuela. He was a former student of Alexis Pirela. I met Gustavo in Montreal, Alexis introduced us



4.



5.

In order of the sequence of images: 1. *Green Pole* by Alejandrina Hernández. 2. *7 Capturas II / 7 Captures II*, by Alexis Pirela 3. *Reflejos que cuentan/ Reflections that talk*, by Beatriz Lopez4. *In—Build—Between* by Marguerite Marion-Reyes. 5. *Tran\$\$\$Formation* by Gustavo Galue. (Source E. Zavarce, 2024. 1,3,5 pictures by the authors except 2 and 4 by E. Zavarce, 2023).

#### ***d. Facilitating communal learning experiences:***

Facilitating communal learning experiences (FCLE) within the context of these socially engaged art proposals involves creating opportunities for shared experiences, exploration, collaboration, and reflection. As Wenger and Lave (1991, 2011) argued about the importance of social learning and collaboration within communities, some Disruption participation points out the role of facilitators in creating spaces for dialogue and communal sharing (see Figure 29 ).

*Paisajes Comunes / Common Landscapes* community workshop, proposed by Lourdes Peñaranda<sup>90</sup>, an artist, architect and educator, provides a platform for community members to come together and explore their shared landscapes through artmaking. Participants can learn from each other's perspectives, experiences, and creative processes, fostering a deeper understanding of their

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<sup>90</sup> A long-time friend from Venezuela. She migrated to Barcelona, Spain. We met as part of the exhibition group “Taller Frangieh” in 1983 and have become best friends since then.

collective environment and cultural heritage and encouraging participants to reflect on the significance of their surroundings.

*Yesteryear's repast: An immersive culinary encounter by Philomena Collective,*<sup>91</sup>, Design: Through an immersive culinary experience, Philomena Collective proposes the opportunity to learn about the cultural significance of food within the community. Participants can engage in hands-on activities such as cooking demonstrations, tastings, and storytelling sessions, deepening their appreciation for food as a cultural expression and social bond.

*Echar Raíces Le Dicen / Put down roots, they tell you: an interplay with tiles collectively by Mariana Sánchez-Hoyos*<sup>92</sup>, an artist and architect: This intervention invites community members to create and install tile artworks collectively, symbolizing their roots and connections to the neighbourhood. Through ludic participation, participants and the guided discussions on identity, belonging, and community resilience will encourage participants to share personal narratives and insights about their cultural heritage and sense of place.

*S'entrelace / Entrelaza / Intertwines: Workshop and action Art-making call by Daniel Djuro-Goiricelaya*<sup>93</sup>, an artist and educator: Daniel's workshop proposal offers a space for collaborative artmaking and action-based projects that address social and environmental issues. Participants can

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<sup>91</sup> The collective: Idris Khiari: Chef/ Liam Kena: Sound Artist and cook/ Ally Rosilio: Chef/Yael Ezerzer: Photography, Chef/ Andrée Uranga. I met Ally and Andrée, who was working at Fonderie Darling while I was also working there. Andrée, from Mexico, a designer and the best bartender was enthusiastic about my project.

<sup>92</sup> Mariana was an artist in residence from Mexico at the Fonderie Darling in the summer of 2023.

<sup>93</sup> Daniel migrated from Maracaibo, Venezuela, to New York. After learning about my research in Montreal, I met him through a mutual friend who mentioned that I should meet Daniel. Moreover, they were right; Daniel is an active, socially engaged artist and teacher innovator who moves people around him.

learn about the intersection of art, activism, and community organizing. They can explore creative ways to effect positive change in their surroundings and foster a sense of empowerment and collective agency.

*Art Terrasse / Terraza* is a collaborative canvas by Patil Tchilinguirian<sup>94</sup>, an artist and designer, and me. It has evolved from a spontaneous idea to a project and a catalyst for community building, envisioning a collective, collaborative creative process of art making.

**Figure 29**

*Composite of Disruption proposals group: FCLE*



1.



2.



3

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<sup>94</sup> Patil is an Armenian migrant from Lebanon. I met Patil when she was doing her master's in design at Concordia University, and she was already a friend of Stefania's. Her energy and charming personality captivated me from the first moment I saw her.



4.



5.

In order of the sequence of the pictures: 1 *Paisajes comunes / Common Landscapes* by Lourdes Penaranda 2. *Yesteryear's Repast*, by Philomena Collective. *S'entrelace /* 3. *Entrelaza/Intertwines* by Daniel Djuro-Goiricelaya. *Echar raíces le dicen /4. Put down roots, they tell you*, by Mariana Sánchez-Hoyos-5. *Art Terrasse / terraza*, by Patil Tchilinguirian and EZavarce. (Source: E. Zavarce 2024, photos: 1,2,3,4 provided by the participants, 5 E. Zavarce 2023).

### Figure 30

*S'entrelace / Entrelaza / Intertwines*



Daniel Djuro-Goiricelaya performs exercises on the Horse Place land—photo E. Zavarce 2024.

### ***Overarching patterns***

The Urban Transformation/Anthropocene<sup>95</sup>: Several submissions explored the theme of urban transformation and the Anthropocene<sup>96</sup>, reflecting on the impact of human activity on the environment and urban landscapes. I came to realize that the theme came after a conversation with Gustavo. Artists like Gustavo Galue, Alejandrina Hernandez, Marguerite Marion-Reyes, Beatriz

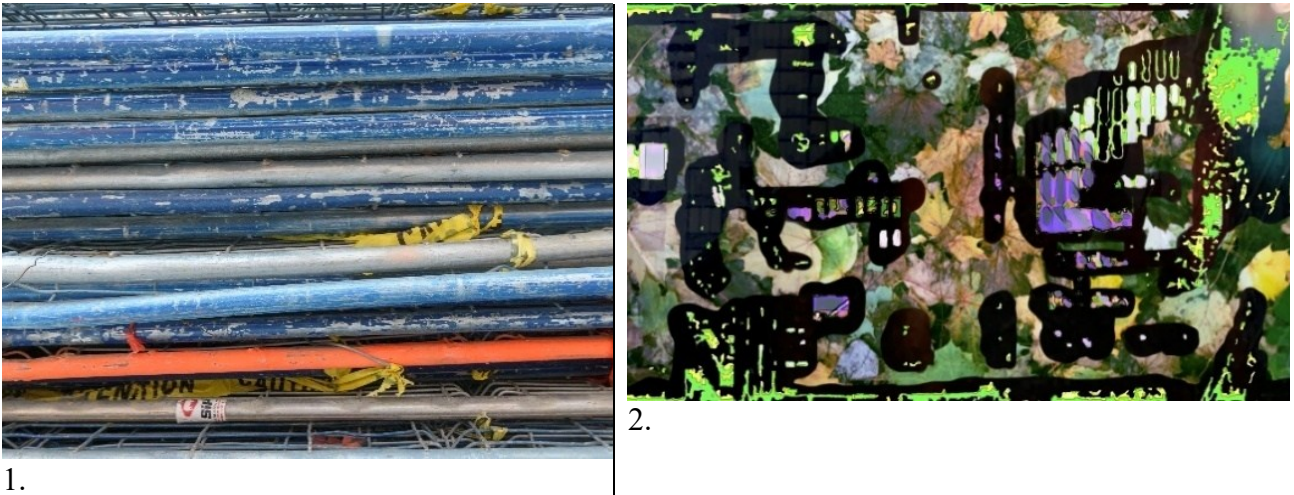
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<sup>95</sup> When these two concepts are brought together, it signifies a focus on how human activities in urban environments are contributing to broader planetary changes and environmental challenges associated with the Anthropocene era. This theme is relevant in discussions about sustainable urban development, resilience to climate change, and the interconnectedness of human societies with natural systems on a global scale.

<sup>96</sup> We are referring “Anthropocene” which is a geological epoch characterized by the significant human impact on Earth's ecosystems and geology.

Lopez, and Alexis Pirela delve into this theme, examining Griffintown's evolving identity in the context of urban development and environmental change. (see Figure 31).

**Figure 31**  
*Urban transformation theme*



1. *Tran\$\$\$formation* photo participation by Gustavo Galue 2. *In—Build—Between* Marguerite Marion-Reyes (source: Photo 1 by the author (2023), image 2 is a screen video captured by E. Zavarce).

Other cross-cultural perspectives and diverse cultural backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences shaped the participation. The theme of personal Memories/Migration played a pivotal role in the richness and complexity of some submissions. The focus is on personal memories and experiences of migration, shedding light on individual narratives within the broader context of Griffintown's history. Proposals of artists like Natasha Doyon and Armando Rivas offer personal testimonies and reflections on migration, contributing to a deeper understanding of the diverse human experiences intertwined with the neighbourhood's past and present.

However, Gustavo's idea of the encounter was also deeply significant, evoking personal memories of the Bev Lev family and honoring the legacy and saga of her admired brother, the late Harvey Lev. Harvey Lev, the property owner who restored New City Gas, was an artist and a community activist in Griffintown. In an interview from July 2015—discussing the challenges facing

the newly trendy area and coincidentally the same summer my family moved to Griffintown—his words carry a poignant resonance: "Griffintown could have been..."<sup>97</sup> This nostalgic and yearning sentiment, lamenting the rapid, unplanned development that failed to consider social purpose, reflects Harvey Lev's vision for a neighbourhood grounded in inclusivity and cultural richness. His perspective intertwines the legacy of restoration, the importance of public spaces, and the preservation of cultural memory with the personal journey of my family arriving in Griffintown during that summer of change, uncertainty and transformation for us.<sup>98</sup>

Other submissions explore Griffintown's ecosystem, considering its ecological dynamics and relationship with nature. Collective works such as *Canadian Poplar* by the Et al. Collective and *Poplar Tales* delve into the neighbourhood's ecological aspects, highlighting the significance of natural elements within urban environments.

The temporality focus: The proposals exhibit a diverse focus on the past, present, and future of Griffintown. The Past is the theme of a few works like Jacky Lo's *Ghosting*, and *Hoof Steps Echoes: A Tender Tale of Griffintown* by Lucine Serhan, which directs attention to Griffintown's historical background, exploring its past narratives and cultural heritage. Most submissions engage with Griffintown's present reality, capturing its contemporary essence and addressing social, cultural, and environmental issues. However, most of the proposals deal with the future, like the collective proposals of workshops and temporary landscape interventions, like *Poplar Tales* by Viviana Murillo

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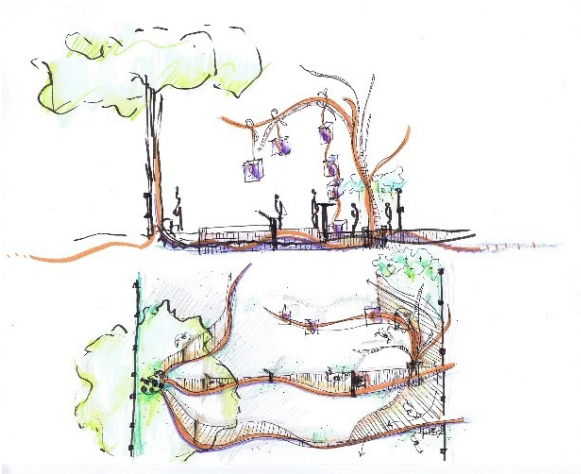
<sup>97</sup> Lev, H. (2015, July 10). Interview by Montreal Gazette [Video min 0:53]

<sup>98</sup> More info: Remembering Harvey Lev: community activist, character, and mensch: <https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/morning-file/remembering-harvey-lev-community-activist-character-and-mensch/>  
Harvey in his own words, about Griffintown (2015): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RzHhjFO-eA>

and *Harvesting Memories: A Time Capsule* by Hernandez Zavarce sisters, envisioning the future of Griffintown, proposing innovative ideas and speculative visions for the neighbourhood's evolution and transformation.

**Figure 32**

*Speculative futures theme: Envisioning the future of Griffintown,*



1.



2.

1. *Poplar Tales* by Viviana Murillo 2. *Harvesting Memories: A Time Capsule* by Hernandez Zavarce sisters. (Source images provided by the authors, 2023).

Through the analysis, I uncovered the interconnected threads that run through the Disruption Art/Design Call submissions, offering thoughtful insights into my research. The exploration of themes such as urban transformation, personal memories, ecosystem dynamics, and collaborative efforts reveals the multifaceted nature of SEA and its contributions to understanding, memory, identity, place, communities, creative collaborations, and urban perceptions. Moreover, the diverse temporal focuses on the past, present, and future provide a holistic perspective on the neighbourhood's values. We better appreciate the rich and complex artistic expressions and collective imagination shaping cultural landscapes as we delve deeper into these common threads and overarching patterns. Notably, most artists contributing to this exploration hail from beyond the confines of Griffintown, bringing diverse perspectives and experiences to the conversation.

### ***Disruption Art/Design Call: Ignite critical learning and awareness***

The participation from my open call, Disruption, invited participants to think about the future of Horse Place and imagine a sense of place and Community and opened new possibilities for curating socially engaged art interventions through ABAR. The unpredictability of the responses made it a complex process, but a cohesive group of projects emerged over time. This allowed me to review and analyze the process and outcomes, leading to the definition of curatorial themes for the in-person exhibition. These themes serve to understand the affinities and connections among the group, fostering dialogue and initiating further conversations.

I saw Disruption as an essential culmination of my research proposal. Even though it was only part of a complex, rich, and multidimensional journey, it was important because, as I will discuss, Disruption art/design call catalyzed conversation: By presenting the topic, theme, and creative challenge of the Art/Design call, individuals were prompted to engage in thoughtful conversations, sharing their perspectives, experiences, and ideas related to the subject matter. Also, it sparked imagination and creativity: The Disruption Art/Design call acted as a source of inspiration, encouraging participants to tap into their creativity and imagination. It opened the possibility for unique and unconventional solutions to emerge.

It helped to create a creative focus. For example, in the design process, where a specific problem or goal guides the creative endeavours, the Disruption of the Art/Design call provided a clear focus for participants. Having a defined scope and purpose helped channel the creativity and efforts of participants toward a common direction. This focus resulted in a more meaningful and impactful outcome, as ideas were channelled into a coherent theme or vision.

Promoting artistic expression and cultural exchange: The Disruption Art/Design call allowed participants to express themselves artistically, contributing to a rich and diverse cultural exchange. By reaching out to diverse individuals, the initiative became more inclusive and representative of different perspectives and backgrounds. At the same time, it encouraged forward-thinking and innovation: Disruption urged participants to think outside the box and explore art creations by sparking imagination and creativity. This open, forward-thinking approach generated unexpected and novel ideas that my traditional problem-solving framework might have never considered.

### ***Curating the online exhibition. Mediating Meaning: Learning from the Details***

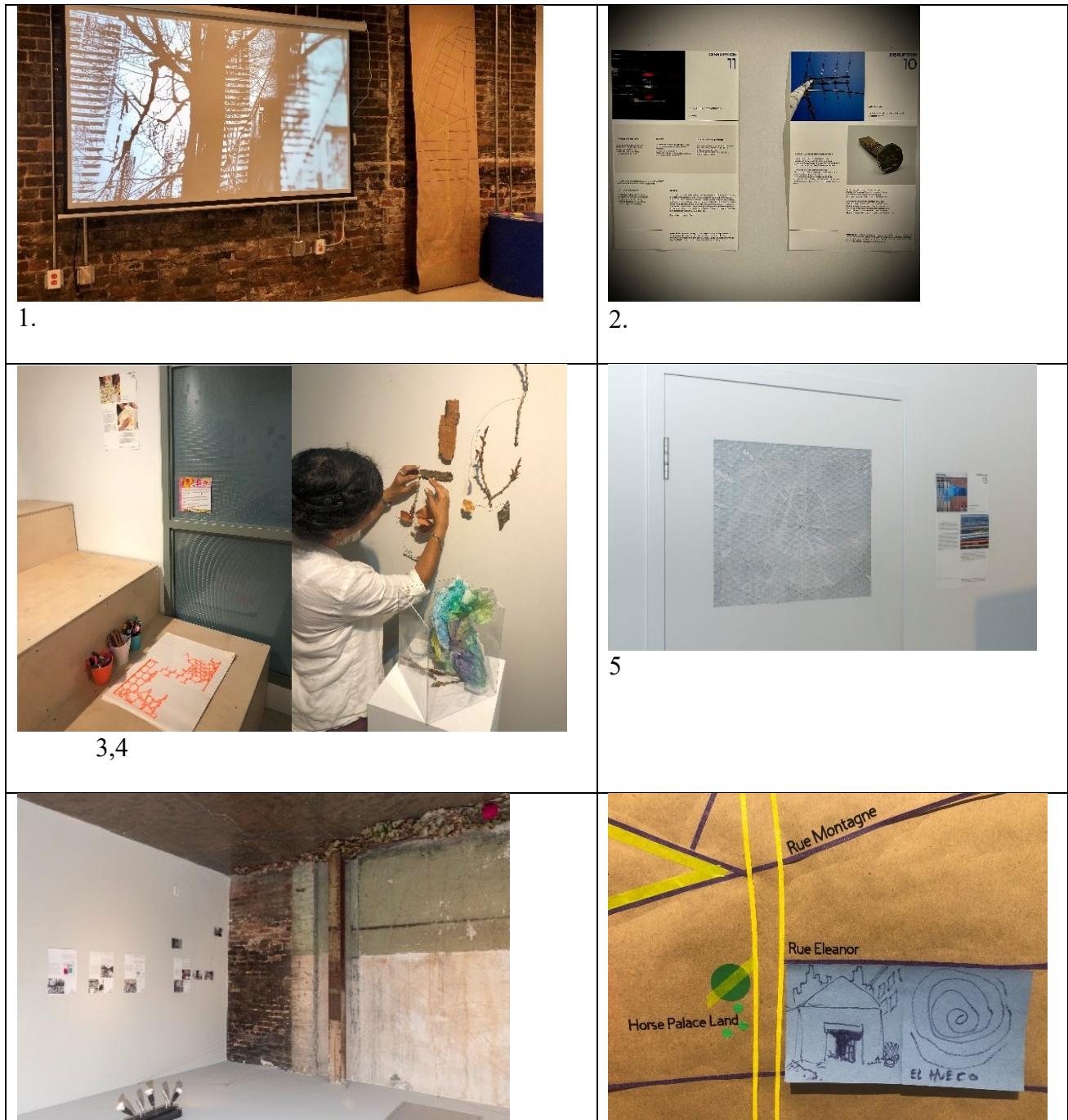
Setting up the web page involved a curatorial process of reflecting and attending to multiple details, each case being different. Some participants sent a lot of information, while others provided only a few ideas or images. For example, Viviana submitted her project like an architecture project, requiring me to select her work carefully. This effort was ultimately appreciated by her: Viviana: “Me encanta como mostraste 'Poplar Tales'. Definitivamente, me encanta tu ojo artístico. ¡Muy buena tu selección de mis fotos!” (“I love the way you showed 'Poplar Tales'. Definitely love your artistic eye - very nice selection of my photos!”) (personal email, 28-04-2024).

In their book *Radical Museology* (2014), Bishop and Perjovschi explore the concept of curatorial practice as a form of mediation between art, audiences, and institutions. The authors argued that curators play a crucial role in shaping how we experience and understand art, involving the negotiation of multiple perspectives and interests. Beyond selecting works, careful display and presentation are essential for creating a comprehensive experience for the audience and ensuring smooth navigation on the web page. Moreover, the final in-person exhibition involved managing the

space, lighting, tags, and overall display to ensure an impactful, meaningful, and aesthetic experience.

**Figure 33**

*transformative futures exhibition at the Fonderie Darling, August 2024*



6.	7
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1. Image of the exhibition space protecting video by Zavarce, from the series *Migrant pages*, and collective mapping. 2. Posters 11 and 12 of Disruption participations. 3. Art terrace corner for open public participation. 4. Viviana Murillo finishing her installation of *Poplar Tales* 6. Gustavo Galue, 6. Laundry room view with disruption participation. 7. Detail of the collective urban mapping at the exhibition. Photos source 1,2,3,4,7 E. Zavarce. 4, 5 Gustavo Galue. 2024.

### ***Following the threads of each participant: Exploring Griffintown through SEA and Dialogue***

During my research, each participation has illuminated distinct avenues, leading me to profound discoveries. I found myself traversing diverse threads, eagerly absorbing new insights. Integral to this exploration is the invaluable exchange that occurs during the process. Whether through in-person discussions or phone conversations, individually or within a group setting, each encounter has catalyzed learning. The richness of these dialogues has left me eager to delve deeper and develop the ideas that have emerged from these shared experiences.

For some artist-researchers, like Vaughan in her Ph.D. thesis, *Finding Home: Knowledge* (2006), walking with her cherished dog was a source of inspiration, and for Lorrie Blair's (2020) contemplative walking along the water, it was their source of inspiration and deep reflection. In the process of this research, each encounter, walking, conversing, and listening to participants has led me to a variety of forms of learning and reflection.

### **Figure 34**

*7 captures/ 7 capturas poems by Alexis Pirela for Disruption.*

<p>The attention and love</p> <p>A look around awakens awareness  Being aware induces connection  Connection creates bonds  A bond can lead to good love  I try looking into the detail</p>	<p>La atención y la querencia</p> <p>Una mirada alrededor despierta la conciencia  estar consciente induce a la conexión  la conexión crea vínculos  un vínculo puede conducir al buen querer  Intento mirar el detalle.</p>
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Following the threads of each participant, finding inspiration and connection. Source: screen capture of the web page showing the Captures/Capturas: <https://elsyzavarce.editorx.io/disruptioncall/portafolio-2-1/7-capturas-ii--%2F--7-captures-ii> (2023)

The echoes of conversations and the resonance of artistic proposals lingered, leaving an indelible mark on Griffintown’s narrative and my transformative learning. I was inspired to continue exploring, disrupting, and reimagining the boundaries of art and community in this ever-evolving urban landscape. Through the process of the Disruption Art/Design call, I engaged in immersive dialogue, and a dynamic variety of insights emerged, envisioning a vibrant and singular community. Each encounter, each conversation, and each proposal served as a thread, weaving together the fabric of understanding and connection. As this chapter draws to a close, the journey continues, with the promise of imaging further exploration and discovery on the horizon, beckoning toward new realms of creativity, insight, and transformation. A sense of place and community arose from the empowerment of connecting with a community and sharing my passion for my new home, Griffintown. Throughout ABAR, I envisioned SEA: Launching, nurturing, amplifying voices with joy, and assembling creativity into vibrant action.

### Figure 35

*Mural: La Libertad del color/ La liberté de la couleur. Griffintown.*



Source EZ, (2023). Following the threads...Gustavo's ideas led me to meet Bev; Bev wrote me one day and said, do you want to meet Patiperra? So, I went to her studio and met Pati. She took on an insight tour of the building. Pati is the artist of the Mural: la Libertad del Color; she did it between June and September 2019, the same year I arrived in Montreal when I started the jewellery course and the PhD. This mural is my morning companion for coffee every day because I can see it from my kitchen window. I always loved it because it reminds me of two girls who combed their hair with two woven pigtails. It means something different after we meet and is full of affective memories.

## **Prelude for the Ending Chapter**

### **Catalysts of change: Unveiling the Socially Engaged Artist's impact on communities**

My contemporary art research exploration (CARE) journey delved me into the transformative potential of socially engaged art. Drawing from personal experience, Future Studies, and art education, I explored place-making, community, urban mapping, sensorial embodied experiences and contextual learning. My three ABAR SEA interventions made me reflect on the multifaceted nature of social engagement and its significance in building a sense of place and community.

Through this exploration, I have proposed a curatorial approach to Socially Engaged Art, envisioning it as a platform for imagining curating futures. By critically examining socially engaged artists' roles as curators and educators, I illuminated their potential as catalysts for profound societal change. My practice in ABAR SEA, spanning roles as an artist, scholar, curator, and active community member, has significantly contributed to fostering social integration, nurturing a sense of unity and tolerance, and enriching the collective comprehension and identity of my community.<sup>99</sup>

I utilized Art-Based Action Research (ABAR), a cyclical and dialogical methodology applied to places or communities, to identify problems and devise solutions. This approach resonated with my background as an architect, professor, and researcher engaged in community work. The ABAR principles encompass various roles within art education, visual arts, and contemporary art projects. The ABAR strategy structured the research process through cycles of investigation/design, action/artwork creation, observation/documentation, and reflection/evaluation. Subsequently,

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<sup>99</sup> In this sense, I have made a tool kit for Curatorial SEA as community building, see Figure 69

interventions were implemented, documented, and observed to gather research data. Furthermore, ABAR emphasizes making the artistic process and results accessible to diverse audiences. Human factors and ethical considerations were integral throughout the ABAR stages, aligning pragmatic objectives with community values and political perspectives (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018). Additionally, ABAR's participatory nature encouraged engagement, communality, and innovative cultural values, aligning with contemporary art's contextual, dialogical, and process-based nature (Jokela et al., 2015).

In shaping my Socially Engaged Art (SEA) interventions, I navigated challenges like time constraints and conceptual dilemmas, balancing functionalist approaches with pedagogical engagement and dialogical encounters. SEA, as a form of artistic inquiry and co-constructive learning, allowed me to explore new social relations, imaginaries, and communities of practice (Helguera, 2011); Pringle, 2009; Franz & Sidford, 2017). It served as a tool for critiquing social issues, enhancing community cohesion, and fostering a sense of place and identity (Bishop, 2011; Birchall, 2015).

**How did the interventions help develop a sense of community and place? How was it an opportunity for the community to encounter and learn?**

In this first intervention, I invited the community to share a collective experience toward engaging with the urban environment and the Fonderie Darling. In implementing the three interventions, I examined notions of SEA and pedagogy, urban sensorial, sense of place and built environment, imaginaries, material culture, sense of community, critical spatial practices, collaborative practices, and communities of practice. Focusing on relational and sensory elements in the first intervention helped participants develop a deeper connection to their community and

environment, encouraging them to reflect on their roles within these spaces. In developing a sense of community and place, the relational and sensory aspects play a crucial role in fostering meaningful connections and experiences.

In the second intervention, I allowed the community to connect and engage in a collective experience centred around the urban environment and Fonderie Darling. This initiative aimed to explore concepts such as urban mapping, pedagogy, urban sensorial experiences, the sense of place and built environment, imaginaries, material culture, a sense of community, critical spatial practices, collaborative approaches, and communities of practice. Through this intervention, community members had the chance to encounter these concepts firsthand, allowing them to learn and engage in discussions about their surroundings, identity, and shared experiences. In the second intervention, the emphasis shifted towards enhancing social interactions and dialogue within the community. By facilitating meaningful conversations and collaborative activities, the second intervention aimed to strengthen urban experience and interpersonal relationships and build a sense of belonging among the community

The third intervention was designed to learn from and build on previous interventions' experiences to co-create and envision alternative futures. Through ongoing research, planning, implementation, evaluation, and adaptation, this intervention aimed to nurture a sense of agency and empowerment within the community, encouraging active and creative participation. It culminated a community's and personal journey towards engaging with the urban environment, Griffintown, a sense of community and the Fonderie Darling, bringing together the insights and experiences gained from the first two interventions.

After the final event of the *transformative futures* exhibition, an assistant at *Nos Vamos de Arepada* asked me how long I had lived in Montreal. I told him I had arrived in 2019, though I meant 2015. He was genuinely impressed by what I had accomplished in such a short period. That comment filled me with a profound sense of accomplishment. I realized that while you can write hundreds of pages for a thesis, you cannot force people to engage in creative endeavours. It takes numerous gestures of care, building connections, and offering creative prompts to make something like the 18 disruptions and the participation of so many individuals along the way a reality. (see a summary of the research process in Figure 70)

In the next chapter, I will discuss curatorial practice, the concept of the future, and some selected background experiences that have shaped my reflection on the significance of curating SEA. Now, I discuss the significance of curatorial practice as socially engaged art, which is curating futures and imagining a sense of place and community.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> I must say that writing the last chapter was in the winter of 2024. I was fortunate to escape the winter by visiting my home in Maracaibo. I, like many Venezuelans who have migrated, still have our home. In my case, because I always wanted to return. For the majority, due to inflation and the many offers of houses and apartments, the cost of those properties is very low. I

At home, I was surrounded by many books, art (many of my friends), sketches, project folders, objects from my children, family belongings, and a patio full of plants and warmth. I felt inspired in every corner and remembered my past in Maracaibo, but I was simultaneously satisfied and content with the process and where it has taken me. I found meaning and interconnection in many experiences.

# VI



*Imaging futures*, E. Zavarce 2021

## CHAPTER VI | IMAGING CURATING FUTURES

### *Introduction*

In this chapter, I explore the intersection of curatorial practice, socially engaged art, and art education and how curating can transcend its traditional boundaries to become a powerful tool for community engagement and social change. Drawing on my experience, the results of my research proposal, and the cases and theories I pointed out in Chapter II. I examined the principles and methodologies that underpin curating socially engaged art. Moreover, I explored how SEA curators can adopt inclusive, democratic approaches that prioritize participation and agency and allow multiple perspectives from communities. (Inayatullah, 2013)

At the same time, I examined concepts such as imaging and Future Studies in Chapter II. Now, I consider my reflections on curating futures. Building upon these foundational ideas, this section delves deeper into the intricate process of imaging curating futures, unlocking new perspectives and insights into shaping the paths ahead.

Ultimately, this chapter serves as a call to action for curators, artists, educators, and cultural workers to embrace the transformative potential of curating as socially engaged art. By harnessing the power of curation to foster dialogue, build solidarity, and effect positive change, we can cultivate more inclusive and equitable cultural landscapes that reflect the richness and diversity of our communities.

### *On curatorial*

In the book *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* (2013) edited by Jean-Paul Martinon (2013), Irit Rogoff, in her “Expanding Field” essay, started by arguing: “We work in an expanding

field, in which all definitions of practices, their supports, and their institutional frameworks have shifted and blurred.” (p. 12). Rogoff (2013) added: “if curating can be the site of knowledge in which to rehearse its crises, then it has the potential to make a contribution rather than to merely enact representation” (p. 17). The author emphasized the potential of curating to contribute to knowledge by addressing epistemological crises and establishing new relationships among different forms of knowledge: “Curatorial/Knowledge addressed precisely such an epistemological crisis, one in which we would not determine which knowledges went into the work of curating but would insist on a new set of relations between those knowledge” (p.16).

This perspective on curatorial practice aligns with the historical roots of the term "curatorial," originating from Latin words meaning guardian, overseer, and, in some contexts, healer or parish priest (Oxford-University-Press, July 2024). The word "curatorial" is an adjective relating to a curator (in various senses of the term), borrowing from the classical Latin "cūrātōrius" meaning of or belonging to a guardian (< "cūrātor" guardian, see "curator" n.). On the other hand, "curator" had two primary meanings by the 14th century. In Anglo-Norman, it means "curatour" referring to a guardian or a priest having a cure of souls. In Middle French and French, it is "curateur," indicating a guardian, protector, administrator, or, in some cases, parish priest. This term originates from the classical Latin "cūrātor" meaning keeper, supervisor, overseer, or guardian, and in post-classical Latin, it also connotes curer or healer (found in *Vetus Latina* in figurative use and from the 12th century in British sources), as well as parish priest (from the 13th century in British sources, and also in continental sources), derived from "cūrāt-," the past participial stem of "cūrāre" (see "cure" v.1, Oxford-University-Press, July 2024)

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2024), there has been an increase in the frequency of the word's usage since the 1960s. Tom Morton (2011) argued in an article entitled, "A brief history of the word 'curator'" that the term "curator" has been overused in this millennium, being applied to various marketing situations, thereby diluting its importance and deep meaning: "It's a long way from the public museum, let alone aqueduct administration or the care of the eternal soul" (paras. 5).

Having the same Latin roots, "curador" in Spanish has the same meaning and tradition as "curator."<sup>101</sup> This means that it has also historically been related to care and healing. Furthermore, it has gained popularity in recent decades, prompting me to consider what it truly signifies: Curatorial as Social Engaged Art.

### ***Hay que curar.../ we must heal***

A long time ago, before I envisioned becoming a migrant, curator, and doctoral candidate developing knowledge about Socially Engaged Art (SEA) through Art-Based Action Research (ABAR) interventions, I experienced the intense turbulence of my country's unravelling. Unbeknownst to us, it was the onset of Venezuela's prolonged socio-economic and political crisis.<sup>102</sup> By 2004, after two years of escalating hardships, the situation had deteriorated so severely that many Venezuelans began contemplating migration. By 2005, an estimated 700,000 Venezuelans had already emigrated, marking the start of a migration wave that would grow exponentially in the years

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<sup>101</sup> In Spanish, "curador" is from Latin: *curātor*, -ōris 'administrador', 'supervisor', 'procurador', y este der. de *curāre* 'cuidar', 'ocuparse de', 'vigilar', 'sanar', 'administrar'. (RAE, 2024).

<sup>102</sup> Venezuela 1958-2013 timeline: <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/venezuelas-chavez-era>

to come.<sup>103</sup> Venezuela's crises—rooted in poor governance, economic mismanagement, and deep political polarization—would later culminate in one of the world's most significant humanitarian emergencies by 2015. However, in 2004, I vividly recall feeling that my country had already begun to fall apart.<sup>104</sup>

During this challenging period, I conceived an exhibition titled *Curara*. The inspiration behind this exhibition stemmed from my daughter, Alejandrina (my daughter, at seven years old and with hearing impairment). In the catalogue for the exhibition, I recounted an incident where my daughter, at the age of seven, uttered a profound statement: "We must heal it!" This declaration came in response to a broken toy, but soon, she began applying the same sentiment to any object or space that required repair, stitching, joining, or restoration. As I guided her through learning various terms associated with these actions, little did I realize that she, in turn, would become the teacher. One day, feeling frustrated and perhaps doubting her vocabulary advancement, I adopted her mode of expression. At that moment, I had an epiphany as I looked around me. I realized that Ale's simple, yet profound wisdom encapsulated a universal truth: "Yes, Ale, it must be healed."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> More information: The Venezuelan emigration crisis: <https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/regionalprofile/english-version-country-profiles/304971/the-venezuelan-emigration-crisis/>

<sup>104</sup> By 2023, the number of emigrants from Venezuela escalated to 7 million: <https://www.iom.int/venezuelan-refugee-and-migrant-crisis>

<sup>105</sup> This sentiment echoed through my reflections, leading me to understand that I inevitably embark on a personal healing journey in healing our environment. However, not just that expression made me ponder the significance of "*Curara*" as caring and healing for ourselves and our world. It was also the process of creating artwork in that exhibition. Sometimes, during those days, Ale would come to my studio and make some strokes on my paintings or intervene somehow. Sometimes, I would rush to the bathroom to clean it, or sometimes, I would have to try to fix it. On one occasion, she left her hand impression on a piece of paper, from which I created a border shape that resembled a long heart shape. I began incorporating that heart shape as a prominent figure in my paintings. Later, she reused that shape and added three rounded shapes to symbolize my three children. And then, I started incorporating that design into my jewelry and other artistic explorations. My family calls that shape "curare". Moreover, it has been a source of inspiration for all of us.

*Curara* represents a process of mutual nurturing—an ignition of inspiration and learning from encounters, intuition, and playful joy. As Ale and I embarked on mutual nurturing through artistic expression, I propose Curatorial Social-Engaged Art as a pathway towards attentive social connection, place-making, and positive community transformation.

### ***Thinking on/about the Future...***

The concept of the future has undergone a significant transformation, as Gerald Delanty, a British sociologist professor, highlighted in the Introduction of the *Special Issue on Social Theory* (2024) and the Idea of the Future. He discusses a new sensibility towards the future's temporality, questioning its openness, the shift from utopia to dystopia, and the impact of posthumanism considering emerging technologies. This evolution prompts an intriguing comparison with past perspectives.

Reflecting on the past, the theme of the future was central in the exhibition *Reincidentes: Entre Milenios* (2001) by the Ene Incident collective project. This exhibition delved into visions, proposals, problems, and relationships surrounding the transition into a new era, once deemed distant and shrouded in myths of the future.<sup>106</sup> At the turn of the millennium, we found ourselves amidst a

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<sup>106</sup> The venue was Centro de Bellas Artes de Maracaibo. In my installation *Consideraciones Telepoliticas* (2001), comprised of ten containers, I explored the notion of loss or misconception that propels us into a new societal and cultural paradigm in the millennium. This included reflections on the lost or falsely perceived aspects such as privacy, avant-garde ideals, utopian visions, dualities, innocence, vulgarity, legitimacy, and certainty. These reflections affirm that our transformations are rooted in what we have relinquished, signalling ongoing change. In *Another New Time / Otro nuevo tiempo* (2001), by Lourdes Peñaranda, the artist points out the phenomenon of transition between adaptation and renovation that occurs when we face a time that seemed distant, immersed in myths of the future. (Peñaranda in *Eneincidentes*, 2001). Moreover, José Luis Chacón's installation *Through the Stargate* (2001) delves into the symbolic significance of 2001, inspired by *2001: A Space Odyssey* film. Through analogies and metaphors, Chacón explores the idea of journeys, contrasting traditional linear paths with the endless exploration depicted in the film.

critical discourse regarding the modern conception of the future; the future was a modern idea, as highlighted by Delanty (2004), who argued that the "modern idea of the future is undergoing a tremendous rupture today such that older or taken-for-granted assumptions about it, as the chronological notion of time, can no longer be left unscrutinized" (p.3).

In his discussion, Delanty (2024) delved into the various dimensions of the future, emphasizing its epistemic, existential roots within the human psyche. He articulated this concept's multidimensional nature, stating, "The concept of the future is unavoidably multidimensional. It is a temporal, embodied, and spatial as well as an epistemic category" (p.17). Furthermore, he elaborated on the need to consider multiple temporalities, encompassing "planetary history, biological history (both human and nonhuman), and the history of human society" (p.7).

Futures Studies have taught us that futures exist in plural form. Viewing possibility as imaginary leads us into an interpretative dimension that is inclusive, performative, and transcendent. Transcending the present, as Delanty (2024) concluded: "Transcendence is also expressed in hope and responsibility" (p.16), the author claims that "... long-term-ism jettisons responsibility for the present in favour of a very distant future" (p.16).

As Delanty argued, individuals are always oriented toward the future in various ways. How do I contribute to shaping future orientations, and what forms do future imaginaries take?

### ***Futurus: Exploring Emotional and Sensory Impact:***

*Futur* originates in the Latin term "Futurus," resonating across languages like Spanish, English, and French. This root stems from the base meaning of *grow* or *become*. This linguistic heritage reflects a fundamental concept of growth and transformation. However, what fuels this

growth? A complex interplay of emotions and concepts shapes our perspectives and aspirations. For instance, wonder propels us to explore the unknown and seek new possibilities. Hope fuels our optimism and motivates us to strive for better futures. Conversely, despair can catalyse change, pushing us to reassess and transform our circumstances. Fear is a warning signal, prompting us to anticipate challenges and prepare accordingly. Fantasy allows us to envision alternative realities and dream beyond the constraints of the present. Finally, agency empowers us to take active roles in shaping our futures, acknowledging our capacity to influence outcomes and make meaningful contributions to the world.

In essence, these driving forces of wonder, hope, despair, fear, fantasy, and agency collectively contribute to our growth and evolution as individuals and societies, shaping the trajectories of our futures. The exploration of these emotional and sensory impacts has led to diverse paths of experience:

- In the initial intervention, participants were enveloped in awe and curiosity, sparking a deep exploration of the unknown.
- The second intervention fostered feelings of joy and communal playfulness, creating a vibrant atmosphere of shared activity and enjoyment.
- The evaluation of emotional and sensory impacts in the third intervention revealed a range of responses from participants. Artwork evoked emotions such as nostalgia, curiosity, joy, awe, fear, and critical reflection, highlighting the diversity of human experiences.

- Proposals for public interventions and performances in the third intervention and workshops encouraged communal rituals and collective envisioning of the future, leaving participants with a renewed sense of hope and shared purpose.

Through these interventions, I uncover the intricate interplay between emotions and sensory experiences, shaping our futures and underscoring the profound impact of our collective imagination and engagement.

### ***Socially Engaged Curatorial Project: CARE and Disruption***

Intuitively, through *Curara*, I started a profound exploration of healing and restoration, not only on a personal level but also as a societal imperative. As Pringle (2009) argued, artists use their experience as creative professionals to initiate a learning journey that mirrors their artistic practice. As an action-based action researcher with three SEA interventions, I embarked on a journey as a scholar to explore the transformative potential of curating as socially engaged art grounded in my own experiences.

In my first intervention, which involved engaging participants in the sensibilization and sensorial process, the proposed workshop catalyzed dialogue and reflection on the neighbourhood's identity, sensorial experience and history. Building on this foundation, the Second Intervention occurred in public spaces such as Rue Ottawa and the former Horse Palace land. Through a deep urban mapping workshop, artists and community members delved into Griffintown's spatial politics and cultural specificities. By adopting an urban scenography framework and deep mapping approach, participants gained a transversal understanding of the neighbourhood's and place dynamics, paving the way for open exploration and documentation.

The third intervention, a mixed-format art call and virtual exhibition titled *Disruption*, envisioned alternative futures for the Horse Palace Land. Through an open call for ideas, participants reimagine and reinterpret the historical site by challenging and prompting creative proposals, challenging conventional notions of ownership and communities, place-making, public spaces, and urban developments. I had participants who participated in more than one of the interventions. In the third intervention, some participated in the first, many in the second, or the informal urban mapping, and all of them followed my research through social media.

In Chapter V, I followed each participant's threads. Moreover, I examined how curating as socially engaged art could foster dialogue, empower people and communities, and positively imagine future changes in urban environments like Griffintown. Through reflective analyses, we illuminated the transformative potential of SEA curatorial practice in shaping collective narratives and fostering inclusive cultural landscapes. (Schön, 1991)

The concept of "Curatorial" transcends its conventional definitions to embody a broader ethos of social engagement and transformative action. In today's world, where crises and conflicts abound, art can catalyze change, fostering dialogue, empathy, and collective healing. (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The collaborative process is one of the essences of Curatorial as Social Engaged Art, where artists, participants, and audiences come together to co-create narratives of resilience and renewal. Throughout my three interventions, I was able to mobilize collective sensibilities, promote conversations, and call for actions toward a sustainable future, as argued by Cucuzzella et al. (2020).

### *Curatorial learning aspects*

Curating, typically associated with selecting and presenting artworks within institutional settings, takes on new dimensions when approached through social engagement. Rather than merely organizing exhibitions, curators become facilitators of dialogue, catalysts for collaboration, and advocates for inclusive cultural practices. As Rogoff (2013) argued: "...And it is the curatorial that has the capacity to bring these together, working simultaneously in several modalities, kidnapping knowledges, and sensibilities and insights and melding them into an instantiation of our contemporary conditions." (p.19)

Amidst the process of the final reflection of this research, I remember a significant conversation with my father about art when I was just starting university. During this discussion about my passion for art, my father mentioned artists' challenges. I remember feeling daunted by the idea of making a meaningful impact in art. At one point, I told him I could pursue a career as an art critic. However, his response was discouraging. From his personal perspective, a curious engineer, art critics often focus on negativity and lack of interest in communicating the possibility of art. Fast forward to my current journey, where I am engaged in Ph.D. research and implementing Socially Engaged Art (SEA) throughout the ABAR process. Through this experience, I appreciated the curatorial approach as a far more effective means of fostering transformative collaboration within society through art.

Rogoff's (2013) insights resonate deeply with my evolving understanding. She argues that the essential links among the art field's collectivity, infrastructure, and contemporaneity are not solely about resistant engagement. Instead, they involve discovering alternate points of departure, archives, circulations, and imaginaries. The curatorial role emerges as pivotal in bringing these elements

together, working across multiple modalities to merge knowledge, sensibilities, and insights into a coherent representation of our contemporary conditions.

Traditionally, selection and curation are fundamental curatorial tasks. As a curator, I had to use my expertise to leverage diverse artworks, artifacts, images, and proposals, selecting and arranging them in a cohesive and meaningful manner that enhances the overall narrative and impact of the online exhibition, in-person exhibition, and dissemination. Designing the exhibition space or website with layout, content editing, and multimedia elements creates an immersive and visually compelling environment that enhances the viewer's experience and engagement.

This journey has taught me that the curatorial approach is about creating meaningful experiences, collaborations and dialogues that can provoke thought, challenge perceptions, and ultimately contribute to a more inclusive and transformative societal discourse through artistic expression.

Reflecting on the significance of curatorial as socially engaged art, I now explore curatorial practice's educational dimensions, including the curators' role in facilitating learning experiences and promoting critical engagement with art and society. First, a Curatorial vision is central to this exploration, representing the clear artistic vision or theme, objectives, and values that guide a project. This vision involves carefully selecting activities, artworks, creative expressions, procedures, and community outreach that align with the project's overarching concept or narrative.

Engagement Strategies are also vital. Strategies such as guided tours, collective mapping, gatherings, and encounters encourage interaction and dialogue among participants, enriching their experience and understanding of the artworks and themes. Additionally, contextualization and

interpretation are essential functions of curatorial education. The SEA interventions required providing context and insights into the historical, cultural, or social significance, fostering critical reflection and dialogue among participants, which played an important role in the process. Also, nurturing, motivating, and coaching were crucial aspects. Especially in the third intervention, these functions significantly supported participants and encouraged their active involvement in the project.

As Rogoff (2013) argued, the curatorial role extends beyond mere presentation; it encompasses a dynamic process of engagement, interpretation, and dissemination, shaping meaningful encounters between art, audiences, and society. I have shown the power of curation as socially engaged art to foster dialogue, build solidarity, and effect positive change. In this sense, we can cultivate more inclusive and equitable cultural landscapes that reflect the richness and diversity of our communities.

Curating as socially engaged art challenges conventional notions of curation as a passive or detached endeavour. Instead, it emphasizes curators' active involvement in their communities, centring their efforts on fostering connections, amplifying marginalized voices, and addressing pressing social issues. By reframing curating as a form of artistic expression, as Helguera (2011) has argued, this chapter seeks to illuminate the transformative potential of curatorial practice in shaping collective narratives and fostering meaningful social interactions. Additionally, this approach to curating encourages continuous learning, as curators must engage deeply with the communities they serve, adapting their practices in response to evolving social contexts and needs.

### ***Hope: Looking to the Future Collectively: Community of Practice and Learning Together***

In the chapter, I mentioned that my first curatorial project, *Body in Question*, was partly an effort to recapture the sense of community and creative energy I had experienced while developing the *Ene Incidents* project. However, when I arrived in Montreal, the absence of a similar community added another layer to the grief of migration. I felt the loss of what I had in Maracaibo—being part of groups that shared my passion and pushed me to learn and positively challenge myself. Swiss educational theorist and researcher Etienne Wenger (2011) describes such a community as a "Community of Practice." Additionally, Futures Studies highlight this type of community as a crucial element for personal development in shaping transformative futures.<sup>107</sup>

The "Communities of Practice" concept, developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, highlights that learning is not an isolated activity but a social process within communities. These communities are formed by individuals with common interests or professions, creating collaborative learning, social interaction, and experience exchange spaces. (Wenger, 2011).

The ABAR SEA interventions played a crucial role in fostering a community of practice essential for our collective vision for the future. These interventions promoted encounters, nurtured imagination, and encouraged participation, motivation, and individual expressive ideas. Through this community of practice, collective inspiration fueled optimism and innovative thinking. Meaningful connections and sharing of insights, ideas, and expressions created a sense of community. (McMillan

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<sup>107</sup> <https://foresightguide.com/achievement-groups-juntos-masterminds-and-fusions>

& Chavis, 1986). It provided a platform for meaningful expression, exchange, and reflection, enabling participants to learn from each other and advance artistic practices and cultural understanding. This community of practice created a vibrant and optimistic outlook, where love and connections are at the heart of our creative endeavours.

### ***Intergenerational and Plural Dialogue. The Interplay of Identities***

The concept of intergenerational and plural dialogue, along with the interplay of identities, is a rich and evolving area of exploration, particularly within the context of curatorial projects and community engagement in the arts. I recall my experience with Lorena Gonzales Inneco's curatorial project *Prácticas y Teóricas* (Maczul, 2013), which exemplifies the power of such dialogues. The project created a dynamic space for interdisciplinary exchange and collaboration by bringing together artists from different generations and backgrounds. My experience in the project enriched the artistic process and fostered a sense of community and shared learning. The project's structure, with multiple weekends of participation and different facilitators, allowed for a deep exploration of ideas and perspectives. It encouraged participants to engage with each other's experiences and identities, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the explored themes. The resulting exhibition displayed art and evidence of the power of collaboration and shared creativity.

Drawing parallels to the SEA ABAR interventions also allowed intergenerational and plural dialogues. My three SEA interventions created a safe space where identities met, ideas intersected, and new forms of expression and understanding emerged. They contribute significantly to the development of a vibrant and inclusive artistic community.

***Socialization and Curatorial Gatherings: Transformative Futures and the final Exhibition Event:  
“Nos vamos de Arepada”***

For my third intervention, I prioritized social interaction as a crucial aspect. I planned informal gatherings following urban mapping activities or during Fonderie Darling's 2023 summer events. As the culmination of this journey of a Contemporary Artist Researching and Exploring (CARE), building community through SEA ABAR, I curated the in-person exhibition *Transformative Futures* at the Mediation Studio. I also planned a communal event to close the exhibition, which I called: *Nos vamos de Arepada*—a finissage (finishing event) with a unique cultural twist. Philomena's collective participation made me valorize the food and the curated culinary events as alternative forms of SEA. *Nos vamos de Arepada (We go Arepada)* proposed a cultural twist by incorporating my Venezuelan tradition of sharing arepas – a traditional Venezuelan cornmeal dish- creating a warm, communal atmosphere that celebrates cultural heritage and fosters connection. The term "arepada" is derived from "arepa," a traditional Venezuelan dish made of cornmeal, often served as a daily meal<sup>108</sup>. With this Venezuelan traditional culinary event, I intended to create a closing get-together, infusing it with a sense of cultural identity and warmth, fostering a communal atmosphere that transcends the typical finesse. This cultural twist adds a layer of meaning to the event, emphasizing the importance of cultural heritage in social engagement and community building within the exhibition context (see invitation: Figure 66).

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<sup>108</sup> Arepas further information: <https://famiakitchen.com/venezuelas-food-history-arepas-hallacas-y-mas/#:~:text=Anthropological%20evidence%20suggests%20Venezuelans%20have,tribes%20learned%20to%20cultivate%20it.>

This curated dinner brought together participants, friends, family, and the Fonderie Darling community, fostering meaningful connections and dialogue. *Nos vamos de Arepada* provided an intimate setting for attendees to share their insights, perspectives, and experiences related to the exhibition's themes. It facilitated networking, forging new relationships, and strengthening existing ones within the artistic community. By integrating social elements like this curated dinner into the exhibition experience, I aimed to create a space for a dynamic exchange of ideas, emotions, and connections, enriching the overall impact of the exhibition and fostering a sense of belonging and collective involvement. (see pictures of the event in appendices G, Figure 67)

### ***Reframing participants as community***

In this section, I discuss how we can reframe our understanding of participants in art, education, and design by moving beyond traditional notions of audience, learners, and users. I highlight their active roles as collaborators and co-creators by recognizing and valuing participants as a vital community. This perspective shifts the focus from passive engagement to meaningful participation, emphasizing the collective potential of individuals to shape and transform creative and educational processes.

Reflecting on my experiences as an artist, educator, designer, and researcher, I realize that the label "participants" barely scratched the surface of who they indeed are. In art, we do not define our audience; in education, we strive to understand our learners; and in design, we strategically characterize them as users, readers, navigators, or dwellers, depending on the role of the individuals interacting with the design. In both cases, we must consider the perceptual conditions, acknowledging how people perceive and interact with our work. As a graphic design professor, I

deliberately avoided marketing jargon like "target audience," recognizing the importance of humanizing the recipients of our designs. As a researcher and curator, I avoided approaching participants as a data source; instead, it was a vibrant and diverse community that enriched my learning processes and collective sensibility. Reframing traditional notions of audience, learners, and users, I recognize participants' agency, diversity, and vital contributions in shaping my transformative learning.

Therefore, who was my community? Reflecting on my three ABAR SEA interventions and the participants in each: ten (10) in the first, seventeen (17) in the second, and approximately thirty-six (36) in the third. Notably, three (3) participants engaged in all three interventions, and six (6) participated in more than one. Many who did not participate in the third intervention, Disruption<sup>109</sup>, still attended the exhibition's opening or closing events. Their shared enthusiasm and engagement during *transformative futures* reinforced and strengthened the sense of community I aimed to cultivate. (see Table 14).

The nature of the first and second interventions brought together friends of my family and neighbours; their backgrounds gravitated around the professions of engineers, architects, designers, and tourist guides. In the third intervention, as an art/design call, artists and designers were drawn to it. However, the resulting Disruption participation and its exhibition offered diverse perspectives, surprising narratives, and innovative expressions, fostering pluralistic dialogue and enriching community engagement.

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<sup>109</sup> I introduce participants of Disruption on Chapter IV

I am delighted to recall the vibrant and diverse community I reached: the Venezuelan diaspora in Montreal and worldwide, friends, neighbours, friends of friends, and friends I made in Montreal's art workshops, my jewelry course and art education colleagues. Additionally, Latin artists from the *Allegades*<sup>110</sup> exhibition, my family and friends of my family were also part of this community, which mainly comprised migrants in Montreal from Colombia, China, Chile, Guatemala, Israel, Lebanon, Mexico, Palestine, and Venezuela. I mostly connected with them through my social network and personal invitations. Only three participants discovered the project through social media beyond my circle.

### ***Plural Insights from the Context.***

Through the third intervention and the iterative ABAR cycle process, I have gained plural insights into the world based on participants' contextual intuitions. These insights have illuminated various aspects of community engagement, cultural dialogue, and potential paths for social change. One key interpretation of these findings is the importance of embracing diversity and multiple perspectives within our communities. We can foster a more inclusive and enriched cultural dialogue by recognizing and valuing different voices, experiences, and narratives. This inclusivity enhances our understanding of each other and promotes empathy, mutual respect, and collaboration. Curating

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<sup>110</sup> *A.llegades* is a group exhibition that brought together eight artists from South and Central America to explore the theme, "How do you live your Latinidad in Montreal? The exhibition was held at the FOFA Gallery at Concordia University (Summer, 2023) and curated by María Andreina Escalona de Abreu. The exhibition title, *A.llegadess*, is a prefix that signifies proximity, contiguity, or intensity, and it also means "arrived" or "close" in Spanish. (<https://www.concordia.ca/finearts/about/galleries-venues/fofa-gallery/exhibitions/2023/a-ilegades.html>)

the city involves harnessing these diverse experiences and perspectives to create impactful artistic interventions that foster meaningful connections (Bishop, 2012; Helguera, 2011))

ABAR, SEA goes beyond knowledge generation, aiming to drive tangible social change. This involved building an atmosphere that encouraged continuous learning, preserved collective memory and history, and created sensory impacts that resonate with individuals on a deeper level. These elements are integral to the overarching goals of the curatorial SEA project, which include promoting cultural exchange, challenging societal norms, and inspiring critical reflection. By considering how these elements contribute to the project's theme, narrative, and objectives, we can further enhance its impact and relevance within our communities and beyond.

As Arendt (1995) points out, weak identities result in weak subjects unable to set goals for themselves. Thus, in response to this permissive era that erodes individual identity and reduces people to passive consumers, curatorial SEA offers a space that nurtures sensitivity, values, and a rich sense of social, historical, communal, spiritual, and creative identity.

### ***Participants' Imprint: Transforming together***

The interdisciplinary researchers and practitioners focusing on the intersection of art, design, and societal transformation, headed by Markéta Dolejšová (Dolejšová et al., 2021), in their article "Designing Transformative Futures" resonates deeply with my thesis, as it encapsulates a powerful reflection on the role of art, design, and social transformation: "Instead of following this path, the practices here continue to develop the capacity to leverage experimental, open-ended processes of co-creative thinking and acting through their transformations, thus helping to plant seeds for imaginative exchange, new intersectional coalitions, learning, and action" (p. 8). Moving away from

conventional paths and embracing experimental ones can leverage imaginative exchange, foster new intersectional coalitions, facilitate continuous learning, and inspire impactful action. Each participant's experience has given me a new memory of the place. Each has contributed to my learning about what a community is and the role of an artist and educator as a curator in communities. Each one has left an imprint on my memory of Griffintown. In my thesis, which focuses on socially engaged art and its potential to spark meaningful change within communities, I have explored similar themes of co-creation, participatory engagement, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The principles discussed by Dolejšová et al. (2021) align closely with the intentions of my research, highlighting the power of art and design in cultivating spaces for dialogue, creativity, and collective action. Furthermore, the authors emphasize recognizing, valuing, and supporting alternative practices at all levels of transformation, underscoring the importance of acknowledging and uplifting diverse voices and perspectives. As they note, "In offering this analysis, we hope to further understanding of these alternative practices so that they are recognized, valued, and supported at all levels of transformation" (Dolejšová et al., 2021, p. 8). This speaks to the need for inclusive approaches that honour the contributions of grassroots initiatives, community-driven projects, and innovative design practices that often operate outside traditional frameworks. This reflection inspires me to advocate for exploring and promoting alternative practices that foster meaningful transformation. We can collectively work towards a more equitable, sustainable, and inclusive future by amplifying the voices of artists, designers, community members, and activists.

### ***Socially Engaged Artist as curator | Social Engaged Artist as an educator***

In the first part of this Chapter, I discussed the concept of the socially engaged artist taking on the role of a curator and how this goes beyond the curation of artworks; it embodies a transformative

approach to leadership and education within the community. My experience as a design professor was an essential asset in the ABAR process, especially in the third intervention.

My art practice has taken me from personal expression and individual production to the impetus of creating and curating, an expanded practice that goes “to the general and collective,” as artist and educator Pamela Harris Lawton argued in the book *Community-Based Art Education Across the Lifespan: Finding Common Ground* (Lawton et al., 2019, p.35).

Nurturing, coaching, and guiding the creative process is not easy. The structure and procedures must be flexible, open, and willing to change strategies if the group or participants need them. This fusion of roles envisions the socially engaged artist as an educator and a curator who guides transformative experiences and shapes future narratives.

As a socially engaged artist, curator, and educator, the individual's practice extends beyond creating art to actively engaging with communities, addressing social issues, and promoting dialogue and change. In this capacity, the SE artist becomes a catalyst for learning and critical engagement, using art as a tool for education and empowerment. When socially engaged artists take on the curator's role, they can become transformative leaders who curate futures. This means curating not just exhibitions but also experiences, conversations, and perspectives that challenge norms, inspire action, and envision alternative futures, thereby stimulating intellectual growth within the community.

In this sense, socially engaged art is an example of how art can be a source of ideas, discussion, and critique of the state of the place and help strengthen a sense of community (Bishop,

2011; Birchall, 2015). It is a means to learn with and from my new living place (Vaughan et al., 2016).

### ***Dialogue and Co-Construction of Meaning and Healing***

One of the exciting things about an art/design call is that you never know how people will understand the invitation, how they will interpret it, or what they will come up with. Throughout the process of the Art/Design call and engaging in immersive dialogue, a dynamic variety of insights emerged, envisioning a vibrant and singular community. The resonances of conversations, art, and design proposals energized and inspired me, leaving an ineffaceable mark.

Some encounters ended in Disruption participation; others were rich conversations that sparked my imagination and gave me different insights into the place. Like, during the third session of urban mapping, Michell introduced an intriguing concept. He suggested exploring three symbolic fluids in Griffintown: water, represented by the presence of the Lachine Canal; chocolate, symbolized by the Lowney factory; and metal, indicated by the Fonderie Darling, where we were all gathered. Another example occurred during our site visit. With a landscape background, Viviana explored the trees while sharing valuable information about the three in the middle of the Horse Palace grounds—the Canadian Populus tree / Canadian Poplar. She also pointed out its characteristics and the abundance of trees in Fountain Park, which were initially planned to delineate the land.

Throughout the collective mapping session, Mitchel and Viviana expressed surprise at the absence of fountains in the area. They discussed how the sound of water could be used to mask the noise of urban traffic, and this concept of masking deeply resonated with me. Since that day, I have

been reflecting on how I have personally used work or other distractions to conceal my emotional vulnerabilities. The insights from that day's discussions have stayed with me, provoking profound contemplation about our surroundings and coping mechanisms. Drawing from Muntañola (1979) and the concept of 'appropriation' of the place, as a notion associated with the sense of place, I realized how this SEA ABAR intervention has been rooting me in place, creating a sense of belonging, place and community, helping me to heal or overcome the migration mourning and the sense of displacement.

***The Future is About Collaborative Dynamics and Embracing Uncertainty.***

Facilitating SEA interventions involved creating spaces for learning about the urban environment and Griffintown and recognizing community outreach's material and human aspects. This included ensuring community members' participation, collaboration, and motivating imagination. It involved engaging both private and communal aspects to enhance community connection. Overcoming barriers such as lack of resources, language, cultural barriers and differing priorities requires creative strategies and inclusive approaches. It was a journey with an ABAR plan but at the same time embracing uncertainty.

This study, guided by SEA within the framework of ABAR, has been driven by a firm personal conviction. This conviction is rooted in the belief that art when engaged with society, can be a powerful catalyst for positive change and community engagement. In formulating a research proposal supported by Art-Based-Action-Research (ABAR), I recognized that each intervention required a willingness to embrace risks and understand the dynamic processes inherent in community engagement through art. The approach was about executing planned interventions and navigating the unpredictable and evolving nature of human interactions and community dynamics.

Despite meticulous planning and organization, the acknowledgment arises that the process has inherent surprises and errors. This recognition is not a failure but an acceptance of community-based projects' dynamic and complex nature. It highlights the importance of flexibility and adaptability in responding to unexpected turns and learning from unanticipated outcomes. A powerful dynamic is set in motion when one formulates an intention and invites others to collaborate. This dynamic involves shared equivocation—a mutual uncertainty or ambiguity that arises when individuals come together with a common interest or goal. This path of uncertainty can be a source of potential co-creativity and collaboration. It signifies the richness of diverse perspectives and the shared space where ideas, interpretations, and expressions intersect.

In community-based art interventions, embracing uncertainty and being open to surprises is integral to collaborative artistic processes' organic and evolving nature. This does not underscore the importance of planning but points out the importance of cultivating a mindset that welcomes the unexpected and values the collective journey of exploration and creation.

Edgar Morin (2002) challenged educators and argued that we must teach to live and confront uncertainty. He theorizes a view of strategy akin to navigating a sea of uncertainties punctuated by occasional certainties. This perspective highlights the critical role of adaptability and resilience, particularly in communal contexts, where continuous learning and evolving strategies are essential in addressing dynamic challenges. Morin's concepts resonate deeply within collaborative dynamics, shedding light on the transformative potential inherent in uncertainty. Rather than seeing uncertainty as a barrier, Morin's ideas encourage a perspective that views it as a catalyst for creativity and exploration. This mindset shift fosters an environment where artists, educators, and communities approach uncertainty with curiosity and openness, leading to the emergence of new ideas and

possibilities. The success of collaborative endeavours axes on conditions that prioritize open dialogue, shared exploration, and a collective willingness to confront uncertainties.

### ***The Horse Palace Land: a site of possibilities***

This thesis may have many beginnings, but the Horse Palace land is one starting place of inspiration. It is a place that captivated my imagination with its beauty and historical significance. It passes unnoticed by passers-by but enchants everyone who passes through the wooden fence. It awakened my activism at a time when it seemed that private developers might claim it, strengthening the idea of this project. It is no longer threatened, having been bought by the municipality and declared Parc de l'Écurie-Horse Palace, thus protected for future generations. (Montréal-Ville, 2021). This space has become a place to inspire alternative futures by inviting the community to participate and envision tomorrow.

At the end of spring 2024, The Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Montréal (CIRM) invited me to a Griffintown heritage workshop. Ph.D. researcher Émy Gervais guided a tour around the neighbourhood. The researcher's main discussion focused on raising the community's awareness of these places' significance. In this regard, with the support of institutions like Fonderie Darling, this research through SEA has contributed significantly. The three ABAR SEA interventions brought the community together to experience the place, share and learn, and promote agency towards the future, inviting them to imagine and participate in Disruption.

The Horse Palace land was an initial departure point and a vector of possibilities. My ABAR SEA demonstrated how a space with historical and cultural value could evolve into a community hub, fostering engagement and envisioning alternative futures. This transformation underscores the

potential of SEA and places like the Horse Palace land to inspire and catalyze community-driven change.

### ***Envisioning Tomorrow: How SEA inspired Alternative Futures for Cities***

What can we learn from the community and the environment to help us envision an alternative future for the cities? Can Future studies provide me with methods to help the community foresight alternative futures and reclaim historical sites?

The community and the environment serve as rich sources of knowledge and experience that can inform our understanding of contemporary urban community challenges and possibilities. By actively listening to the voices of diverse communities and observing the dynamics of the urban environment, we can gain valuable perspectives on issues such as sustainability, social equity, cultural diversity, and collective well-being. SEA played a crucial role in this process by bridging the gap between art and community, encouraging dialogue, participation, and creative expression. Through collaborative projects, interventions, and participatory workshops, SEA invited people to reimagine their urban environments, envisioning futures that prioritize inclusivity and resilience. Imaging a *City of Possibility*, as feminist professor Leslie Kern proposes in her book *Feminist City* (2021), is an aspirational project as an ongoing experiment in learning to live together and better in this urban world.

By integrating the principles of SEA and embracing a contemporary mindset, we can explore innovative solutions, foster meaningful connections, and co-create visions of sustainable urban futures responsive to diverse communities' needs and aspirations. As Jokela et al. (2015) noted, contemporary art is inherently contextual, dialogical, and process based. Particularly, SEA in

community and environmental contexts is intertwined with people, places, and everyday circumstances, promoting engagement and communality. In this sense, envisioning alternative futures, the authors further emphasized the crucial role of the art educator as an innovator of cultural values, advocating for "Communality" as a means to foster shared search and a “counterforce to extreme individuality and consumption” (p.435).

### ***Exploring Socially Engaged Art and Urban Social Sustainability***

SEA can be related to the multidimensional concept of urban social sustainability as Larimian & Sadeghi (2019, p. 1) argued: “We argue that urban social sustainability is a multidimensional concept that incorporates six main dimensions of social interaction, sense of place, social participation, safety, social equity, and neighbourhood satisfaction” SEA interventions align with these dimensions by actively engaging communities, fostering a sense of identity and belonging, promoting inclusivity and safety, and ultimately contributing to the overall well-being and satisfaction of urban neighbourhoods.

ABAR SEA interventions can be considered comprehensive strategies that simultaneously address various facets of urban social sustainability. These interventions create spaces for social interaction, empower communities through active participation, foster a sense of place and belonging, promote safety and social equity, and contribute to the overall sense of community. Through these endeavours, ABAR SEA interventions positively contribute to building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable urban communities.

### ***Partnering for Change: Institutional Collaborations and Curatorial SEA practices***

In recent years, significant attention has been focused on the role of art institutions in fostering active community participation. This research concentrates on the Art-Based Action Research (ABAR) intervention of Socially Engaged Art (SEA) within the context of Griffintown, with the support of the esteemed Fonderie Darling. My contribution has been understanding how these initiatives can empower institutional agencies and promote vibrant community engagement. I sincerely appreciate the significance of Fonderie Darling, recognizing its historical and cultural importance, its dedicated team, the diverse community of artists it nurtures, and the passionate public that values this space. These aspects have all been invaluable to my research. This dissertation has contributed to empowering institutional agencies through the emergence of SEA as a potent tool for social change and community development, facilitating vibrant curatorial community engagement. As I look to the future, I envision a continued growth and evolution of SEA initiatives, with art institutions playing a vital role in fostering inclusive and equitable community engagement. I hope to see a proliferation of innovative curatorial practices that prioritize social justice, accessibility, and participatory approaches. Furthermore, I aspire to continue exploring the potential of SEA to address pressing social and environmental issues and to collaborate with artists, community members, and institutional partners to co-create a more just and sustainable future.

### ***Responsive Gestures in Community Building***

This PhD dissertation explored the intersections of curating socially engaged art interventions and art-based action research as responsive gestures in community building and place-making. The significance of responsive gestures, such as listening, understanding, collaboration, and co-creation, in fostering meaningful connections and relationships within the community played a crucial role in

engaging participants, building rapport, and facilitating dialogue about community experiences, thus promoting inclusivity in curatorial practices and socially engaged art projects.

As an outcome of my PhD research, I have learned that art can be a powerful site for fostering the *right conversations* within a community (Inayatullah, 2012, 2013b, Rogoff, 2013). This process requires time, effort, and a commitment to building trust. Successful community engagement hinges on the consistent, transparent, and inclusive facilitation of these conversations, essential for meaningful and lasting emotional connection. Becoming responsive gestures in community building (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In Figure 71 I summarized a proposed methodology as Curatorial Practice for Transformative futures.

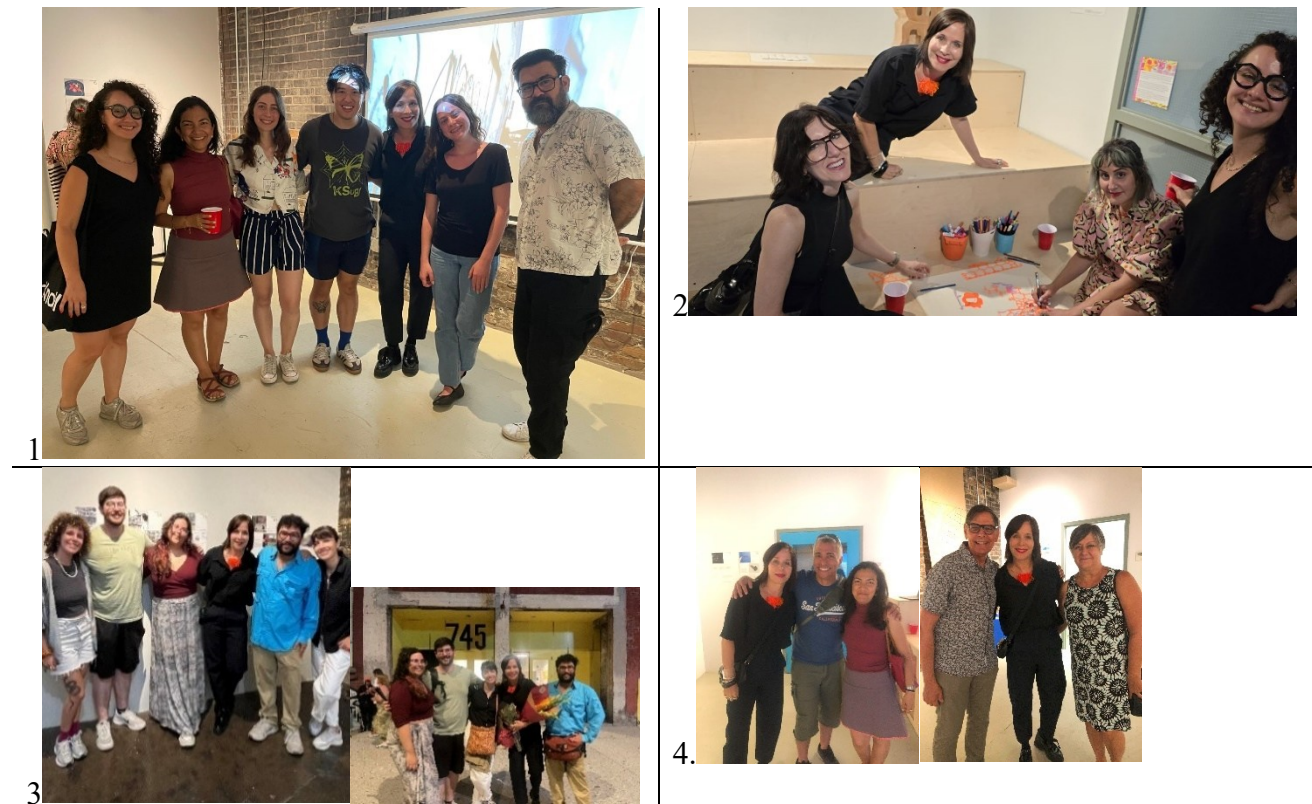
***In the end, everything was About Love and Connections.***

The three interventions in Griffintown were evidence of the power of socially engaged art and art-based action research. They did not just foster community networks; they ignited a spark of friendship and camaraderie. These interventions were more than just about artistic expression. They were about forging deep, meaningful connections within the community. The ABAR SEA interventions demonstrated that nurturing meaningful connections and friendships is not just a byproduct of creative work but an integral part of building strong and vibrant communities. By promoting collaboration, empathy, and interchange, they create spaces where individuals can thrive collectively, fostering a sense of belonging and shared ownership of the creative process.

By envisioning the future of socially engaged art and ABAR interventions through friendship, reciprocity, community and place-building, we can aspire to create resilient and thriving communities that celebrate creativity, diversity, and collective empowerment. Reflecting on my past

experiences, I realized that friendship in creative work is not just about companionship; it is about building resilient networks of trust and collaboration that fuel innovation, resilience, and a sense of purpose.

**Figure 36**  
*transformative futures exhibition, pictures of the vernissage*



Source of photos: 1 ,2 and 3 José Antonio Hernandez 4. Gustavo Galue. 2024.  
(More pictures in appendices Figure 52: Pictures of the transformative futures vernissage)

**Figure 37**  
*Some of the participants in the closing event.*



Final event: *Nos vamos de arepada*. I invited participants from the three interventions to the closing event of the *transformative futures* exhibition. Some were able to attend, creating a warm and meaningful gathering. After sharing delicious arepas and torta tres leches for dessert, I invited them to introduce themselves and share a little about their experiences with the interventions, especially those who participated in Disruption. Carlos, Daniel, Gustavo, Beatriz, Denise, and Alexis are in the picture from left to right. This heartfelt moment of connection reminded me of the power of art and community to bring people together, celebrate shared stories, and imagine transformative futures—photo E. Zavarce, 2024.

## **Laying the Last Brick: Reflections and Contributions**

Reflecting on my journey, I realize I have been laying bricks of responsive care, affection, and love through my work in ABAR and the three SEA interventions. My spatial readings have evolved, and I have come to understand the meaning of physical spaces and places in a new light. I have negotiated my identity and belonging, and my interventions have impacted my sense of self and connection to Griffintown.

My migrant experience has taught me the value of humility, resilience, adaptability, and community. I have seen how art can be a powerful tool for expression, healing, and social change. Through my work in ABAR SEA interventions, I have sought to create inclusive spaces that foster a sense of belonging and empowerment for marginalized communities.

As a SEA curator and art educator, I believe it is essential to address the complexities of our contemporary world through art experimentation, affection, and transformation (Dator, 2022). My interdisciplinary approach to applying ABAR has fostered cultures of cross-disciplinary collaboration and community engagement. My SEA practice prioritizes affective and meaningful experiences, emphasizing social engagement, community building, and integrating art, design, and social practices.

Through this journey, I have come to valorize affective experiences, social connections, and collective creativity in art education. The joy I have experienced in this work has been profound, and

I hope to inspire others with this "affectivitis" - a condition of deep joy and connection that I believe can be contagious.<sup>111</sup>

My migrant experience has also taught me the importance of empathy, compassion, and solidarity. I hope my work can contribute to building a more just and inclusive society where everyone can thrive and feel a sense of belonging.<sup>112</sup>

### Figure 38

*August 2023, daily illustrations*



Boulevard Bonaventure, digital photo with intervention: E. Zavarce 2023

<sup>111</sup> 'affectivitis' is a neologism derived from the Latin word 'affectus,' meaning emotion or feeling, and the suffix '-itis,' indicating a condition or state, similar to words like 'arthritis' or 'appendicitis'. This suffix is often used in medical terminology to denote an inflammatory or pathological condition; in this case, 'affectivitis' suggests a condition of intense emotional experience or feeling

I invented 'affectivity' as a neologism to capture the essence of this idea. I hope it will resonate with others and become part of our shared vocabulary. The term in Spanish will be "afectivitis" also a neologism with the same meaning.

<sup>112</sup> In the appendices Figure 43, I shared a tool kit for curating SEA as a community-building tool based on my implementation of three SEA ABAR interventions in Griffintown. (Vella, et al., 2021).

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## Appendices

### Appendices A| Ethical Certificates

**Figure 39**

*Certification of completion of TCPS: CORE 2022*



**Figure 40**  
*First Certification of Ethical Acceptability*



CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY  
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

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Name of Applicant:	Elsy Zavarce
Department:	Faculty of Fine Arts\Art Education
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	Socially Engaged Art interventions through Art-Based Action Research (ABAR): Imaging a sense of place and community
Certification Number:	30017310
Valid From:	October 21, 2022
To:	October 20, 2023

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.



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Dr. David Waddington, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

**Figure 41**  
*Second Certification of Ethical Acceptability*



CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY  
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

---

Name of Applicant:	Elsy Zavarce
Department:	Faculty of Fine Arts\Art Education
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	Socially Engaged Art interventions through Art-Based Action Research (ABAR): Imaging a sense of place and community
Certification Number:	30017310
Valid From:	February 23, 2023
To:	February 22, 2024

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.



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Dr. David Waddington, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

**Figure 42**  
*Third Certification of Ethical Acceptability*



CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY  
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

---

Name of Applicant:	Elsy Zavarce
Department:	N/A
Agency:	Faculty of Fine Arts\Art Education
Title of Project:	Socially Engaged Art interventions through Art-Based Action Research (ABAR): Imaging a sense of place and community
Certification Number:	30017310
Valid From:	June 01, 2023
To:	May 31, 2024

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.




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Dr. David Waddington, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

**Figure 43**

*Third Certification of Ethical Acceptability, June 01, 2024, to May 31, 2025*



CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY  
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

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Name of Applicant: Elsy Zavarce

Department: Faculty of Fine Arts\Art Education

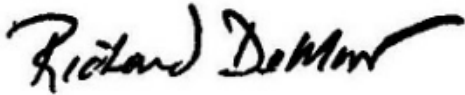
Agency: N/A

Title of Project: Socially Engaged Art interventions through Art-Based  
Action Research (ABAR): Imaging a sense of place and  
community

Certification Number: 30017310

Valid From: June 01, 2024 To: May 31, 2025

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have  
examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and  
consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be  
acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.



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Dr. Richard DeMont, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

## Appendices B| Chapter I, Placing the grounds

**Figure 44**  
*Griffintown and Fonderie Darling History.*



Graphic design by E. Zavarce, (2023).

## Appendices C| Chapter II, Foundations and scaffolding

**Table 5**

*Proposal plan phases.*

Phase	Cycle	Actions
Ph.D. project proposal	Research proposal	-Preliminary work. Contextual research and analyses -Literature review -Articulate methodology Background, Groundwork. -Formulate a research proposal -Ethics approval
First Intervention Fonderie Darling	Investigation/ Design, Planning	Research Fonderie Darling's community outreach background and future aims. Create collaboration with the Fonderie Darling team and community. Context and networking research.
	Making actions/ Artwork, Photography workshop: Personal narratives and the urban environment	Execution of the first iteration.
	Observing/ Documenting,	Mapping, community survey, participant observation, evaluation of the SEA implementation process and results, and strategic interviews. Documentation of the process
	Reflecting /Evaluating.	Evaluation and reporting Ethics approval for the second iteration
Second intervention Mapping Rue Ottawa and the Horse Palace	Investigation/ Design,	
	Making actions/ Artwork Urban mapping	Participants will be asked to document their thoughts and experiences through note-taking, drawing, audio, and audio/visual recordings. Then, they will be asked to share the documentation gathered to make a collective map.
	Observing/ Documenting, and	Mapping, community survey, participant observation, evaluation of the SEA implementation process and results, and strategic interviews. Documentation of the process
	Reflecting/ Evaluating.	Evaluation and reporting Ethics approval for the third iteration
Third intervention Horse palace Land Open Art-design call	Investigation/ Design	This iteration intends to raise community awareness and inspire future action in the symbolic location of the Horse Palace.  This art call will invite an initial vision of what could be done to reclaim the space for the community, improve the site, and integrate responses of the inhabitants, artists, designers, and the public in future urban plans.
	Making actions/ Artwork	Virtual exhibition of the design and art ideas for the Horse Palace
	Observing/	

	Documenting	
	Reflecting/ Evaluating	Evaluation and reporting Ethics approval for the third iteration
General reflection	Comparative analysis	Answering the research questions.
Write thesis		Retrospective Analysis of the entire project

(Source E. Zavarce, 2022).

**Table 6**

*First iteration plan.*

Weeks	Phase	Activities	Data collection and method
1 - 2	Investigation/Design, Planning	-Coordination meetings Fonderie Darling. -Writing research grant opportunities and grant applications for the workshops and exhibitions. - promotion of design materials	Journal of activities. Site documentation.
3 - 4	Planning and promotion	Promotion of the Workshop: -Community outreach: Fonderie Darling network, social media network of Griffintown	Journal of activities
5 - 8	Making actions/Artwork	Execution of activities, including a photography workshop for the community. Organizing an exhibition: virtual and in-person	-The visual mapping - Photo-Assignment -
9 - 10	Observing/Documenting	Documenting the process. Fostering connections with the community. Selected interviews. Fostering a dialogue during the exhibition	-Selected interviews. -Photo elicitation -Participant observation.
Winter December - January 2023	Reflecting/Evaluating	Evaluation of the workshop Answering research questions. Sub questions: What is the SEA artist and educator's role in working in an open community? Retrospective analysis. Coding. Formulation of the best practices guide for the next intervention Write results	

Photography workshop plan: Personal Narratives and the Urban Environment was done from October to December 2023 (Source Zavarce, 2022).

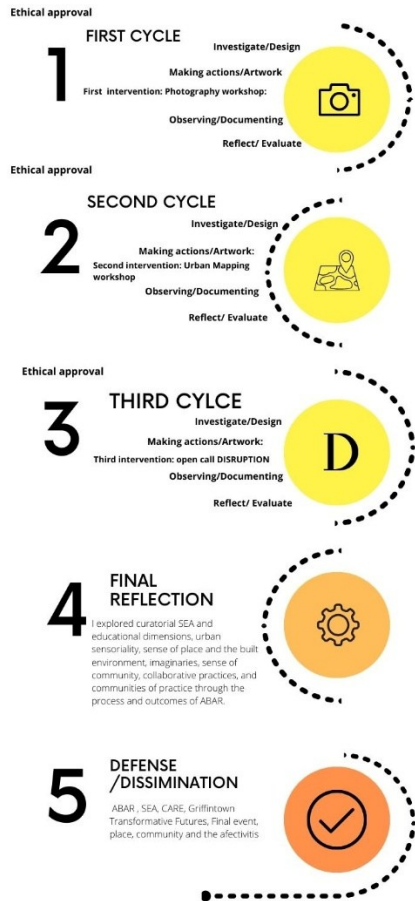
**Figure 45**

*Process of SEA through ABAR*

## Imaging a sense of place and community SEA Interventions through ABAR

### PROCESS

Preliminary work: Contextual research and analyses, Literature review, Articulate methodology, Background, Groundwork, Formulate a research proposal



Ely Zavarce, Ph.D. candidate Art Education,  
Concordia University, Advisor: Lorrie Blair  
2025

Source: E. Zavarce 2022

**Figure 46**

*First intervention Poster*

## Community photography workshop

We are looking for participants to learn about the Griffintown community.

- We are inviting adult participants to a photography workshop as part of the research: *Imaging a Sense of Place and Community* conducted by Ph.D. candidate Elsy Zavarce. **Objectives of the Research:** The study examines how Socially Engaged Art (SEA) can help develop a sense of community and place through interventions.

We are planning an enjoyable art-making community activity. You are invited to participate in a photography workshop about personal narratives and urban environments. These activities include looking and listening about the neighborhood, walking and exploring Griffintown in a semi-guided tour, taking pictures and having a good conversation. We will start at the 20th-anniversary exhibition TU M'ENVELOPPES ET JE TE CONTIENS. Then the researcher will take the participants to significant sites around the Fonderie Darling area to explore the site's sensoriality, material, historical, political, and social significance.

Learning about the neighbourhood may bring a sense of belonging, connecting to the material and social significance of the site, and sharing stories can lead to a social connection and a sense of community.

You will be asked to document your thoughts and experience through note-taking and photography. You will be invited to share your photography and comments in an online exhibition, in person, and with research publications.

This free activity includes free entrance to the Fonderie Darling on the day of the workshop. You can use your cell camera or bring a professional one. |

We will meet at the reception of the Fonderie Darling. Max group: 10 persons  
you can register at this link (google form): [\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](#) or email to the researcher email.



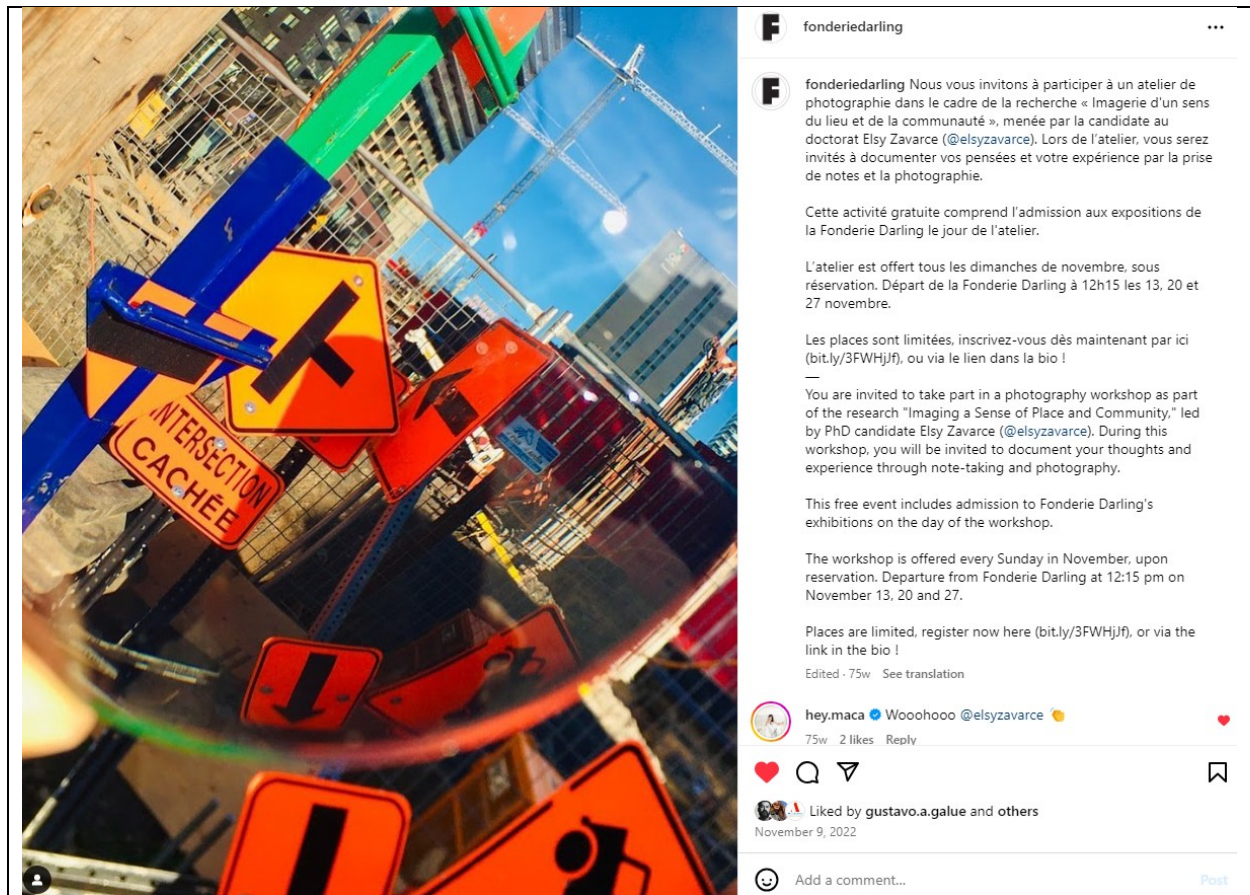
**When:** November, 6, 13, 20 and 27 2022 at 12:15 pm

**Location:** Fonderie Darling. 745 Rue Ottawa. H3C 1R8 Montreal. Canada

Contact information: Elsy Zavarce, Ph.D. candidate at Concordia University. **Email:** [elsy.zavarce@mail.concordia.ca](mailto:elsy.zavarce@mail.concordia.ca)

Source E. Zavarce 2022

**Figure 47**  
*First intervention: Photography workshop invitation*



Screen captures of Fonderie Darling Social media, source E. Zavarce 2022

**Table 7**  
*Participant's Responses*

**Question #1: What were your key takeaways from this event?**

Participant	Answer:
Rene	The interconnections that art provides.
Beatriz	Great way to know the city's history
Shahnaz	How Art can transform spaces and give them a different feel and meaning while reflecting the history of a place and telling its story
Lea	Through interacting with the city and intervening, we always interact with the past but also with the future. We shape future possibilities by deciding which possibility of interacting with our

	environment we choose in the present. We impact people living there now and shape how people encounter it in the future. Who gets to do what depends on social standing in the city, nonetheless, we all can claim our space in a way. There is an ongoing dialogue between architecture, and art - us living, creating in an environment, and interacting with it. Architecture is kind of a living being, that is created and kept alive and also has a life of its own (like the silo that is left alone for now). Everything is always up for interpretation and the interpretation changes, even when the physical doesn't. The Silo number 5, for example, relates to its surroundings and through associations of people encountering it (Mambo number 5) to them on a personal level. When something changes in the environment, the dialogue about the city changes. We can talk about the past but the way we do is shaped by what we encounter today. Change is, and should be, ultimately collaborative. It affects everyone. I really enjoyed hearing about current and past ideas for development in Griffintown, about discourses about the area, and about perspectives from people living and working there. By photographing the area through the lenses, we were also quite literally able to see it from a different perspective, intervene, and explore other possibilities of what it could look like.
Lucine	Search deeply in what is the meaning of a place beyond your personal lens.
Denise	Exploring this part of the city through someone else's eyes was amazing. I was able to observe things I may have otherwise overlooked and not cared to know about. This brought meaning to the experience as a whole. Learning about the history of the Fonderie Darling was also significant. These rich stories about the past add so much to how we experience the "walk-through" the building and its surroundings.
Gustavo	I really appreciated the opportunity to visit de Fonderie and learn about its connection with the neighbourhood and the community.
M. Virginia	We need to know more about our neighbourhood and how lovely it is
Christian	the common materiality of art and industry and their respective forms of community
Patchil	The history of Fonderie Darling, its impressive archives and preservations of the past, and the contributions of the foundry to its neighbourhood with public art contributions
Maria Escalona	I learned so much about the area of Griffintown and met new people. I also took the time to reflect on my experience in this city, as a citizen, as an immigrant, as a woman, as an artist, and as someone who speaks multiple languages and appreciates the bilingualism of Montreal.

**Table 8**

*First intervention: Participants answer the second question.*

**Question #2: Any additional comments regarding the workshop?**

Participant	Answer
	Any additional comments regarding the workshop?
Beatriz	It was very informative and enriching!
Shahnaz	I would recommend it and would love to participate in future ones.
Lea	The workshop was very interesting, and I found it very interesting to discover the area in this way. There was a lot that I had no idea about before. It felt like a walk through time and space at the same time. I would have appreciated a bit more guidance or information about the photography part and a more guided group discussion. Thank you for the workshop!

Lucine	Great project
Denise	Thank you, Elsy!
Gustavo	The photo walk, coupled with the comments by Elsy Zavarce, gives you a different perspective on the neighbourhoods of Griffintown and the Cité Multimedia.
Maria Virginia	The passion she put into the workshop
Patchill	Perhaps sharing some of this history of the neighbourhood through public art interventions that are participatory and community-oriented for example like the cite memoir project. Different stations can be mounted on Ottawa Street taking us back to different eras of the neighbourhood. It could be an interesting research project that the Fonderie can also contribute to.
Maria Escalona	More workshops during warmer season!

**Figure 48**  
*Beatriz Lopez's email.*

**November 9, 2022.**

*Hola Elsy,*

*Te adjunto algunas de las fotografías de nuestro recorrido por los alrededores de la Fonderie en tu Workshop del domingo ante pasado.*

*Pensando en la historia de esa parte de nuestra ciudad, realmente quedé conmovida por varias razones. Primero tuve la sensación de que el tiempo se detuvo en esa área donde están los silos, y sentí un sentido de pertenencia que no había sentido en otro lugar, también sentí un gran silencio, como si la pátina del tiempo luchara aún entre el deterioro y la supervivencia.*

*Me parece hermoso y realmente elocuente que la comunidad se una a ese silencio que habla tanto de lo que es y fue Montreal en esas áreas, que se manifieste la necesidad de preservar la historia y su significado para todos los que amamos la belleza del espacio y su memoria.*

*Hay algunas fotos de sombras, de nosotras, o la mía sola, un poco para reafirmar esa sensación de lo que no está, de ese silencio, de esa soledad que sigue allí más allá de nuestra presencia. (Las visualizó juntas como una serie)*

*Las otras fotografías son detalles del óxido y el desgaste de ese engranaje que hace referencia y homenaje al pasado. Otras, del instante que deja la belleza del otoño.*

*Tengo otras que después podemos ver juntas, pero estas forman parte importante de lo que sentí en esta experiencia.*

*Gracias de nuevo por la invitación.*

*Beatriz*

**Figure 49**

*Traduction by the author of Beatriz Lopez's email*

**November 9, 2022 (English translation from Spanish made by the author)**

*Hello Elsy,*

*I am enclosing some photos from our tour of the area around the Fonderie in your Workshop on Sunday before last.*

*Thinking about the history of that part of our city, I was really moved for several reasons. First, I had the feeling that time stood still in that area where the silos are, and I felt a sense of belonging that I had not felt elsewhere; I also felt a great silence, as if the patina of time was still struggling between decay and survival.*

*I find it beautiful and really eloquent that the community joins in that silence that speaks so much of what is and was Montreal in those areas, that the need to preserve the history and its meaning for all of us who love the beauty of the space, and its memory is manifested.*

*Some photos are of shadows, of us or of me alone, to reaffirm that sense of what is not there, of that silence, of that loneliness that is still there beyond our presence. (I visualized them together as a series.)*

*The other photographs are details of the rust and wear and tear of that gear, which makes reference to and pays homage to the past. Others are of the instant left by the beauty of autumn.*

*I have others that we can look at together later, but these form an important part of what I felt in this experience.*

*Thanks again for the invitation.*

*Beatriz*

**Figure 50**

*Google form follow-up first intervention.*

<b>What were your key takeaways from this event?</b>	<b>Any additional comments regarding the workshop?</b>	<b>Name (optional)</b>
The interconnections that art provides.	Any additional comments regarding the workshop?	René Lemieux
Great way to know the city's history	It was very informative and enriching!	Beatriz Lopez
How Art can transform spaces and give them a different feel and meaning while reflecting the history of a place and telling its story	I would recommend it and would love to participate in future ones	Shahnaz
Through interacting with the city and intervening, we always interact with the past and the future. We shape future possibilities by deciding which possibility of interacting with our environment we choose in the present. We impact people living there now and shape how people encounter it in the future. Who gets to do what depends on	The workshop was very interesting, and I found it very interesting to discover the area in this way. There was a lot that I had no idea about before. It felt like a walk-through time and space at the same time. I would have appreciated a bit more guidance or information about the photography part and a	Lea Elina Hofer

<p>social standing in the city, nonetheless, we all can claim our space in a way. There is an ongoing dialogue between architecture and art - us living, creating in an environment, and interacting with it. Architecture is kind of a living being that is created and kept alive and also has a life of its own (like the silo that is left alone for now). Everything is always up for interpretation and the interpretation changes, even when the physical doesn't. Silo number 5, for example, relates to its surroundings and through associations of people encountering it (Mambo number 5) to them on a personal level. When something changes in the environment, the dialogue about the city changes. We can talk about the past, but the way we do is shaped by what we encounter today. Change is, and should be, ultimately collaborative. It affects everyone. I really enjoyed hearing about current and past ideas for development in Griffintown, about discourses about the area, and about perspectives from people living and working there. By photographing the area through the lenses, we were also quite literally able to see it from a different perspective, intervene, and explore other possibilities of what it could look like.</p>	<p>more guided group discussion. Thank you for the workshop!</p>	
<p>A search deeply in what is the meaning of a place beyond our personal lens.</p>	<p>Great project</p>	<p>Lucine</p>
<p>Exploring this part of the city through someone else's eyes was amazing. I was able to observe things I may have otherwise overlooked and not cared to know about. This brought meaning to the experience as a whole. Learning about the history of the Fonderie Darling was also significant. These rich stories about the past add so much to how we experience the "walk-through" the building and its surroundings.</p>	<p>Thank you, Elsy!</p>	<p>Denise Olivares</p>
<p>I really appreciated the opportunity to visit de Fonderie and learn about its connection with the neighbourhood and the community.</p>	<p>The photo walk, coupled with the comments by Elsy Zavarce, gives you a different perspective on the neighbourhoods of Griffintown and the Cité Multimedia.</p>	<p>Gustavo Galue</p>
<p>We need to know more about our neighbourhood And how lovely it is</p>	<p>The passion she put into the workshop</p>	<p>Maria</p>
<p>the common materiality of art and industry and their respective forms of community</p>		<p>Christian Roy</p>

<p>The history of Fonderie Darling, its impressive archives and preservations of the past, and the contributions of the foundry to its neighbourhood with public art contributions</p>	<p>Perhaps we can share some of this history of the neighbourhood through public art interventions that are participatory and community-oriented, such as the cite memoire project. Different stations can be mounted on Ottawa Street, taking us back to different eras in the neighbourhood. It could be an interesting research project that the Fonderie can also contribute to.</p>	<p>Patil Tchilinguirian</p>
<p>I learnt so much about the area of Griffintown and met new people. I also took the time to reflect on my experience in this city as a citizen, as an immigrant, as a woman, as an artist, and as someone who speaks multiple languages and appreciates the bilingualism of Montreal.</p>	<p>More workshops during the warmer season!</p>	<p>María Escalona</p>

Source E. Zavarce 2022

**Figure 51**

*Zine project, I found myself in the basement/ Me encuentro en Basement.*



Graphic Design E. Zavarce. Source EZ (2022).

**Figure 52**

*Poem Me encuentro en el Basement*

Me encuentro en el Basement,  
 Me encuentro en presente y en gerundio,  
 Me encuentro pensando en el pasado y lo que será de mi futuro,  
 Me encuentro pensando en español. Inglés y en francés  
 Me encuentro cosas que duermen, dice Guillaume que se despiertan con mi mirada.  
 Me encuentro pensando en Cadenas, el poeta, en Derrota y otras cosas, pues hay muchas a mi alrededor.  
 Me encuentro en el Sous-sols, con mi cuerpo tropical y con otras cuerpos singulares y plurales de aquí y por allá.  
 Me encuentro el sótano con el casco que soñé usar alguna vez como arquitecto y ahora uso como mediadora.  
 Me encuentro como mediadora entres cosas y casos de un dialogo entre amidos y artistas  
 Me encuentro aprendiendo de otro Gran Antonio y de sus hazanas en Montreal  
 Me encuentro explorando con otros un recorrido como en tiempos de Rio Claro.  
 Me encuentro con frio, a veces con calor oyendo ruidos, pasos y ecos entre muros de más de 100 años.  
 Me encuentro y desencuentro pensado que alguna vez me sentí posmoderna.  
 Me encuentro moldes, chécheres, arte y recuerdos que me encantan como los del solar de mi abuela,  
 Me encuentro en el basement de alguna vez los Darling Brother, Ltd. (1888-1991), ahora Fonderie Darling (2002), -  
 Me encuentro con el arte como mediación, medición como performance. Bienvenue.

Text and chart: E. Zavarce, (2022).

### Figure 53

*Poem I am in the Soul-sols*

I am in the Soul-sols / I find myself in the Sous-sols  
 I find myself in the present and the gerund,  
 I find myself thinking about the past and what will become of my future,  
 I find myself thinking in Spanish, English, and French  
 I find myself thinking about things that sleep; Guillaume says they wake up with my gaze.  
 I find myself thinking about Cadenas, the poet, *Derrota*, and other things, for there are many around me.  
 I find myself in the Sous-sols, with my tropical body and with other singular and plural bodies here and there.  
 I find myself in the basement with the helmet I once dreamed of using as an architect and now use as a mediator.  
 I find myself as a mediator between things and cases of dialogue between friends and artists.  
 I find myself learning from another Grand Antonio and his Montreal exploits.  
 I find myself exploring a journey with others, as in the times of Rio Claro.  
 I find myself cold, sometimes hot, listening to noises, footsteps, and echoes between walls more than 100 years old.  
 I find myself thinking that I once felt post-modern.

I find moulds, knick-knacks, art, and memories that I love, like those of my grandmother's solar,  
 I find myself in the basement of once the Darling Brother, Ltd. (1888-1991), now Fonderie Darling (2002) -  
 I find art as mediation and mediation as performance. Bienvenue.

Text and chart: E. Zavarce, (2022).

## Figure 54

*Poem Je me retrouve dans le*

Sotano  
 Je me retrouve dans le Sotano  
 Je me trouve dans le présent et dans le gérondif,  
 Je me retrouve à penser au passé et à ce qu'il adviendra de mon avenir,  
 je me retrouve à penser en espagnol, anglais et français  
 Je me retrouve à penser aux choses qui dorment, Guillaume dit qu'elles se réveillent avec mon regard.  
 Je me retrouve à penser à Cadenas, le poète, à *Derrota* et à d'autres choses, car il y en a beaucoup autour de moi.  
 Je me retrouve dans les Sous-sols, avec mon corps tropical et avec d'autres corps singuliers et pluriels ici et là.  
 Je me retrouve au sous-sol avec le casque que j'ai rêvé d'utiliser comme architecte et que j'utilise maintenant comme médiateur.  
 Je me retrouve comme médiateur entre les choses et les cas d'un dialogue entre amis et artistes.  
 Je me retrouve à apprendre d'un autre Grand Antonio et de ses exploits à Montréal.  
 Je me retrouve à explorer avec d'autres un voyage comme à l'époque de Rio Claro.  
 Je me retrouve à avoir froid, parfois chaud, à écouter les bruits, les pas et les échos entre des murs vieux de plus de 100 ans.  
 Je me surprends à penser que je me sentais autrefois post-moderne.  
 Je me retrouve dans les moules, les bibelots, l'art et les souvenirs que j'aime, comme ceux du solaire de ma grand-mère,  
 Je me retrouve dans le sous-sol de l'ancienne société Darling Brother, Ltd. (1888-1991), aujourd'hui Fonderie Darling (2002), -.  
 Je me retrouve dans l'art comme médiation, la médiation comme performance. Bienvenue.

Text and chart: E. Zavarce, (2022).

## Appendices E| Chapter IV, Second intervention

**Figure 55**

*Second intervention: Urban Mapping workshop invitation*

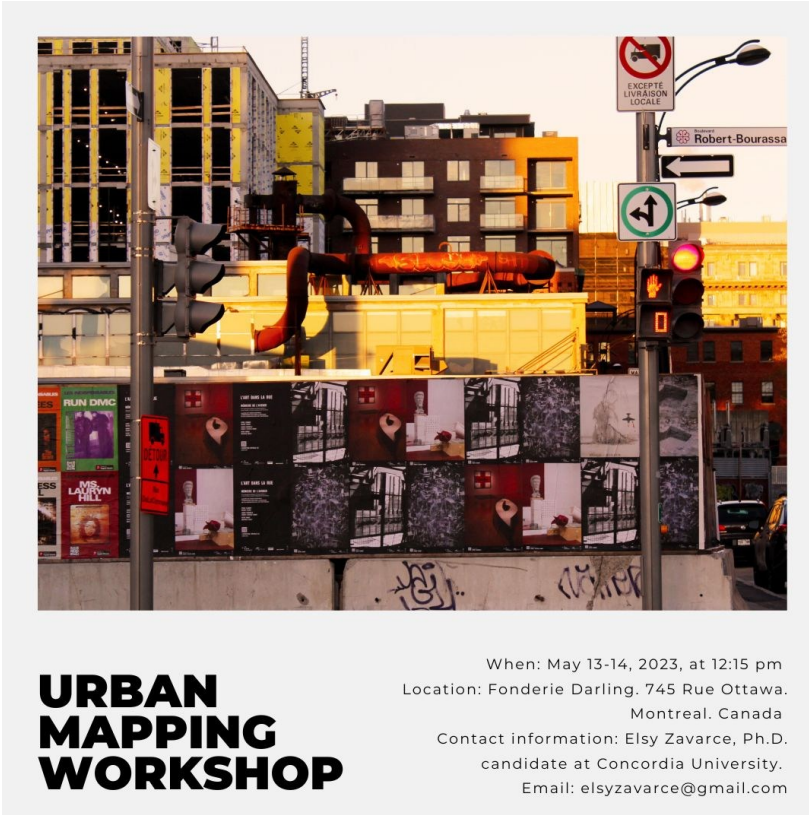
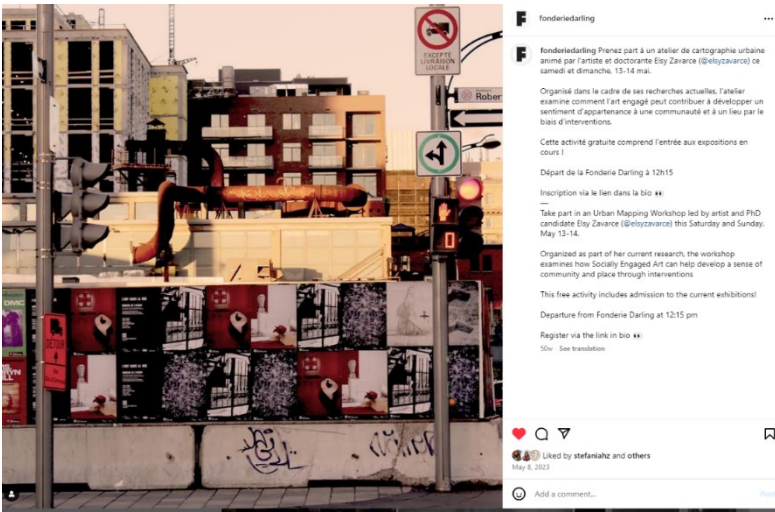


Photo and graphic design E. Zavarce. Source: EZ (2023)

**Figure 56**

*Second intervention Fonderie Darling Social media promotion*



Screen captures of Fonderie Darling's Instagram post 2023

## Figure 57

*Second intervention: Urban mapping poster*

We are looking for participants to learn about the Griffintown community and think about its future.

We are inviting adult participants to an Urban Mapping workshop as part of the research: *Imaging a Sense of Place and Community* conducted by Ph.D. candidate Elsy Zavarce. **Objectives of the Research:** *The study examines how Socially Engaged Art (SEA) can help develop a sense of community and place through interventions.*

We are planning an enjoyable art-making community activity. You are invited to participate in an urban mapping workshop to explore situated methods for engaging with the spatial politics of urban changes, focusing on the discursive, social, material, and cultural specificities of Griffintown. The researcher will take the participants to significant sites around Fonderie Darling and Ottawa Street to explore the site's sensoriality, material, historical, political, and social significance.

Learning about the neighbourhood may bring a sense of belonging, connecting to the material and social significance of the site, and sharing stories can lead to a social connection and a sense of community.

You will be asked to document your thoughts and experience through note-taking, videos and photography. You will be invited to participate in a collective urban mapping. In addition, you will be asked to share your images and comments in an online exhibition, in person, and with research publications.

This free activity includes free entrance to the Fonderie Darling on the workshop day. You can use your cell camera or bring a professional one.

We will meet at the reception of the Fonderie Darling. Max group: 10 persons  
you can register at this link (google form): [\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](#) or email to the researcher email.

When: May 13-14 and June 17-18, 2023, at 12:15 pm

Location: Fonderie Darling, 745 Rue Ottawa, H3C 1R8 Montreal, Canada

Contact information: Elsy Zavarce, Ph.D. candidate at Concordia University. Email: [elsy.zavarce@mail.concordia.ca](mailto:elsy.zavarce@mail.concordia.ca)

Source: E. Zavarce (2022)

## Figure 58

*The urban mapping route of the second intervention.*

GRIFFINTOWN - MONTREAL

RUE OTTAWA

RUE QUEEN

FONDERIE DARLING

Place Public

Rue Prince

Indigenous Peoples Settlement

Robert Bourassa Boulevard

Rue Dohrouie

Future Mary Griffin park

New City Gas

Rue Ann

Rue Shannon

Future Place Villon (2015-2020)

Rue Poul

Rue Young

Future Mary O'Reilly park

Rue Murray

HORSE PALACE LAND

Future Parc de l'Écurie Horse Palace

Rue Eleanor

Rue de la Montagne

Place St Ann

Rue du Séminaire

Future Des Bois Corbès park

Rue Saint Thomas

RUE WILLIAM

Parc du Bassin à Bois

Source: EZ (2022)

**Table 9**

*Identifying the variables, categories, or themes relevant to the research.*

From the Urban Mapping workshop, First session. Field notes and follow-up form comments.

	Theme cards comments	Future	Follow-up feedback	Categories/themes	Participant observation
Suzanne	-Bricks and layout of bricks -Where were the bricks manufactured? -Who are the architects of Griffintown? -Ghost histories Suggestion: Memorial Park in the Horse Palace land	Green, pedestrian, small shops and restaurants, a place for lazy Sundays, a meeting alley		Historical continuity, cultural heritage, storytelling.	The group was very participative and actively involved before and after the walk. Suzanne and Denise expressed many ideas by drawing the area on the map.
Jose	How do we connect the historical dots?	Ottawa should be lively and respond to the neighbourhood's history by connecting the historical dots.	Opportunity to get in touch, better understand, and reflect with other people on insights of the community	Historic preservation, adaptive reuse, urban development, cultural significance.	Background of participants: One neighbour from Quebec has lived in the area for ten years. An artist friend from Concordia, a family from Chile. My husband, an architect and immigrant, has been living in the area for four years.
Denise	Old versus new Difference, Disruption	The future of Ottawa Street should reflect its history. Revive the idea of buildings, turn them into landmarks, restore them, or do something that can be appreciated by all. Where we can lean down its stories	there is much more history to (street/urban) architecture than we think -it is worth getting to know. - it was interesting to learn about the neighbourhood (and Ottawa Street) through other	Historic preservation, adaptive reuse, urban development, cultural significance.	

		people's experiences - it is so remarkable how urban design (sometimes) strives to integrate/main tain certain aspects of culture and/or intentionally generate collective experiences - thinking about spaces, and how we move through public spaces, it was nice to have the opportunity to ponder what I might want to see within some of the spaces we walked through.	
--	--	--	--

Source E. Zavarce 2023

**Table 10**

*Identifying the variables, categories, or themes relevant to the research.*

From the Urban Mapping workshop second session. Field notes and follow-up form comments:

Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 May 2023

Stefania	Imagining possibilities in the urban context. Discovering the industrial and historical past of Griffintown. Enjoying the surroundings with the community	I would love to continue rethinking and appropriating our neighbourhood.
Carlos	While Griffintown is developing quickly with condos on every corner, there already exists a rich history of the neighbourhood. The vision for the future of Griffintown	

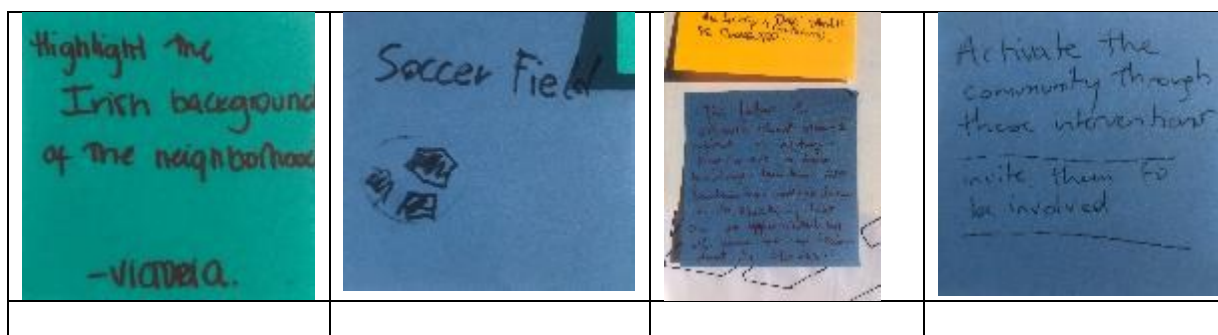
	requires a collective examination of its past, with an eye on the current mishandlings.	
Jose Andres	There are many unique details in our neighbourhood that we don't notice in our day-to-day, such as its history, landmark buildings, and art. We as a community should do a better job of highlighting them and trying to build community through them.	It was really well organized and guided. Participation was intellectually stimulating.
Victoria	There is a lot of history in Griffintown that the residents are unaware of due to the new constructions, which ignore the Irish background.	
Patil		
Aldrick		
Amir	Comment on the Registration form: I want to learn about the community and this project and find out how I may be able to contribute.	
Mari Virginia (Pipin)		

Source E. Zavarce 2023

**Table 11**

*Urban mapping theme card responses.*





Source: EZAarce (Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 14 May 2023) (2023).

**Table 12.**

*Identifying the variables, categories, or themes that are relevant to the research*

Table of participants' Google follow-up responses of the third section of the Urban Mapping workshop:

Name optional		
Alejandrina	knowing and learning about the history of the Irish and the Indians before being conquered. Visit the horse palace, the cafe, industrial enterprises of the time, and details that still remain historical.	I like to hear and see how the group was sharing and commenting with each other in a fluid way. It was a good exercise for me to analyze and experience it as a journey through time. Thanks for giving us a good guide and sharing your research on Griffintown! Te quiero mucho, eres una verduga!
Mariana	There are many valuable sites worth preserving. I understand the necessary changes for housing in the neighbourhood, but history is key.	It was an enriching tour, I loved knowing the historical context of Griffintown and what is at stake with the new developments.
Viviana		
Comment on the registration form: Learning about initiatives or thoughts on Socially Engaged Art		
Théo	Discovering the Horse Palace Land, the history of some buildings, and taking the time to observe the environment of Griffintown	It would be nice to have a presentation about the evolution and history of the Horse Palace Land
Mitchell		

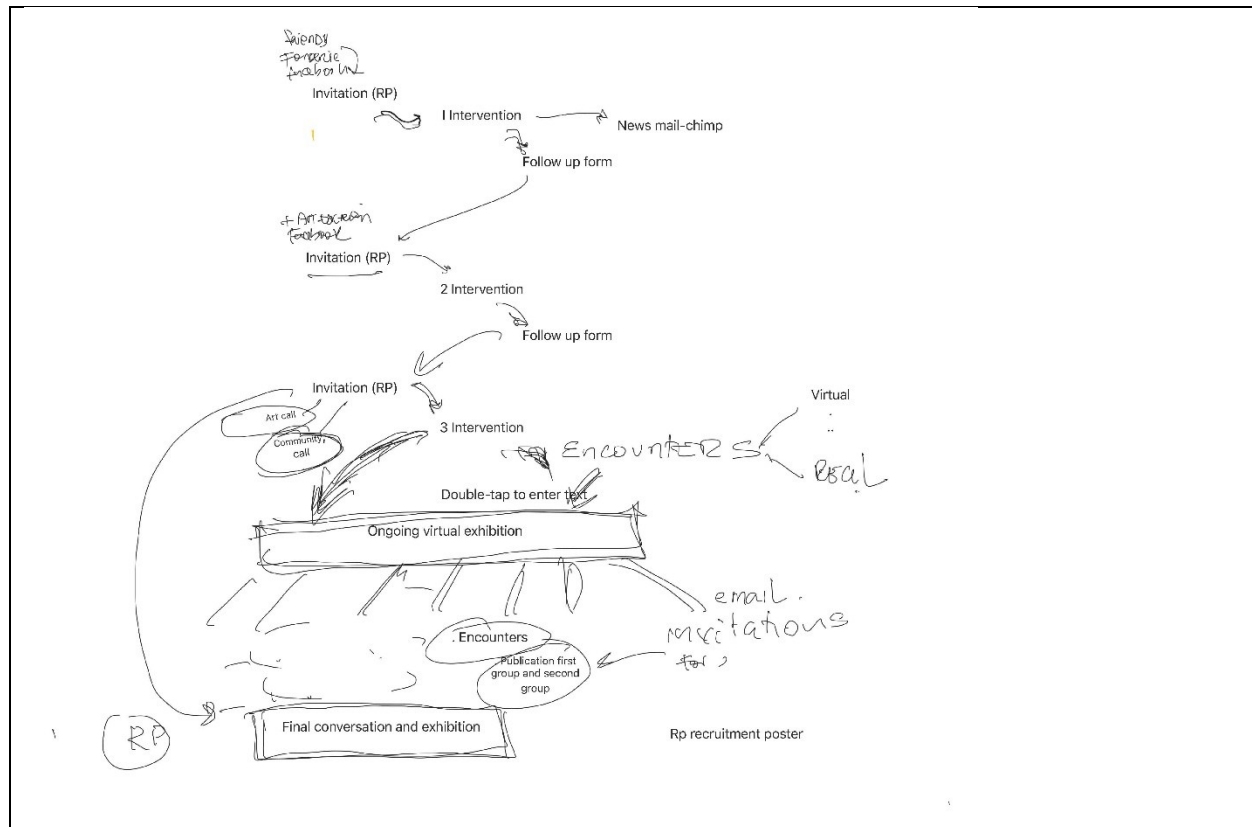
Source: E. Zavarce Sunday 14 May 2023 (2023)

Table 13  
Comparative Formative evaluation of the interventions.

	First Intervention	Second intervention	Third intervention
Participation	Incertitude if people will come. Who will come to the workshop?	Less incertitude of who is coming because of the	
Collective participation	Minimum collective participation	++ Very good with the urban mapping	? – sometimes++I did some gathering and spontaneous urban mapping
Creativity	With the submission	+with the participation and submissions.	+++
Community outreach expected	Less than I expected	As I expected	Slowly, but Excellent.

Source: E. Zavarce 2023

Figure 59  
Community outreach flow



How I see the process. Mind mapping. Source EZ (2022).

## Appendices F| Chapter V, Third intervention: Disruption

**Figure 60**

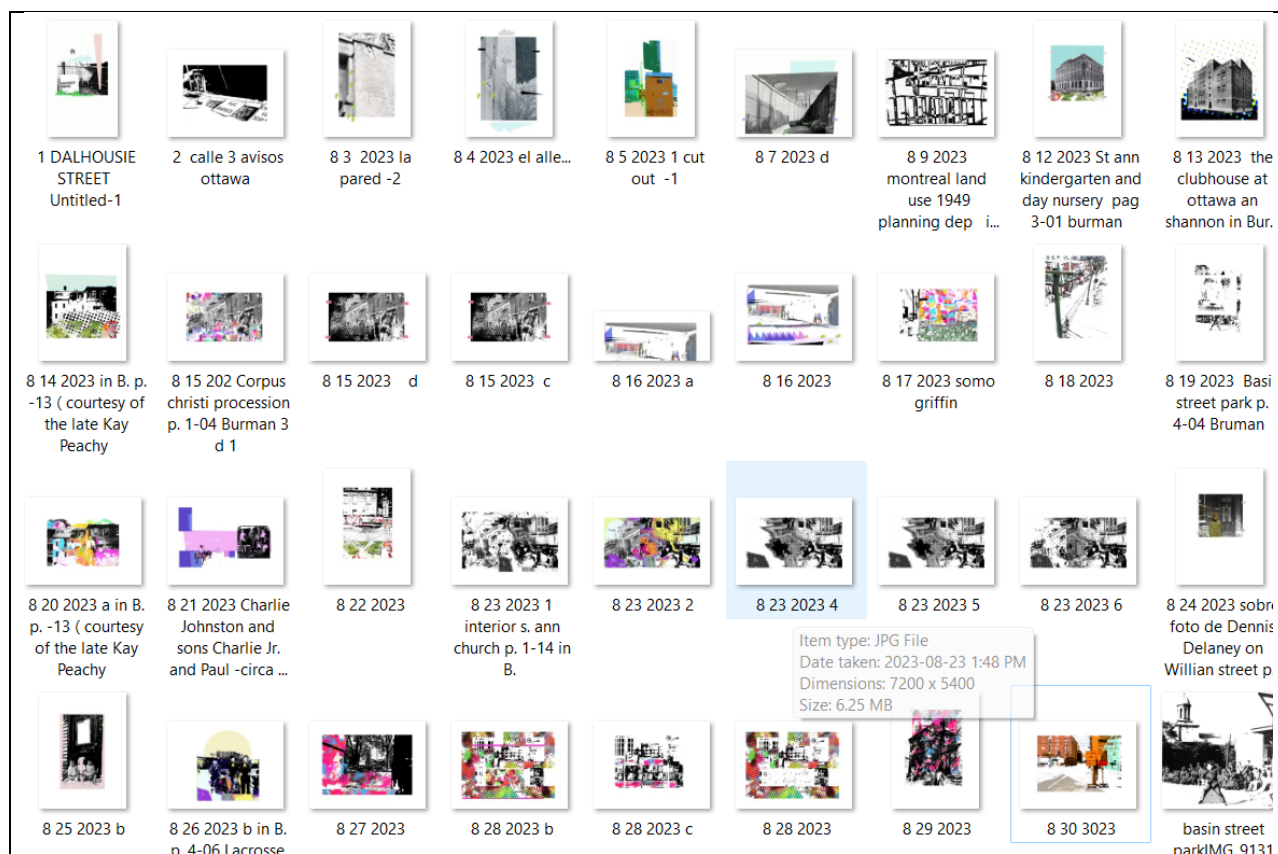
*Disruption Art/design call invitation*



Photo and graphic design E. Zavarce, 2024

**Figure 61**

*A glimpse of the August illustration series.*



Series of illustrations E. Zavarce, 2023. Source: screen capture of E Zavarce's computer 2024

**Table 14**

*Disruption participation, approx. in chronological order, and the interventions that participated*

#	Title	Media/ action	Participants	Interventions that participated
	<i>Disruption Web Page Section I</i>			
1	<i>I Lived There</i>	A Testimony	Natasha Doyon	The third
2	<i>Canadian Poplar</i>	Site intervention Horse Palace Land, Griffintown.	Et al. Collective	The third
3	<i>Green Pole</i>	a poem, video animation, and photography.	Alejandrina Hernández	The second and third
4	<i>At Rue Ann. Journal of An Encounter.</i>	LAB IDEAS: Gustavo's idea.	An encounter with Gustavo, Margaret, and Bev at Bev's studio	The third
5	<i>Yesteryear's Repast</i>	An immersive culinary encounter	Philomena Collective	The third

6	<i>7 Capturas II / 7 Captures II</i>	CAPTURAS de palabras que emanan/ CAPTURES of words that emanate while wandering.	Alexis Pirela	The second and third
7	<i>Reflejos Que Cuentan/ Reflections That Talk-</i>	Photography and poems of her journey	Beatriz Lopez	The first and third
8	<i>Echar Raíces Le Dicen / Put Down Roots, They Tell You.</i>	intervention with tiles collectively -	Mariana Sánchez-Hoyos-	Second and third
9	<i>-In—Build—Between</i>	video and poem	Marguerite Marion-Reyes	The third
	<i>Disruption, Web Page Section II</i>			
10	<i>S'entrelace / Entrelaza/ Intertwines.</i>	Workshop and action art-making call	Daniel Djuro-Goiricelaya	The third
11	<i>Tran\$\$\$Formation</i>	photography	Gustavo Galue	The first and third
12	<i>La Passion De Los Carpinteros, O Todos Esos Lugares Donde Dormi En Eleanor 311/ The Passion of The Carpenters, Or All Those Places Where I Slept In Eleanor 311</i>	Video performance proposal	Armando Rivas	The third
13	<i>Poplar Tales</i>	Sculpture for Place-making	Viviana Murillo-Morales	The second and third
14	<i>Hoofsteps Echoes: A Tender Tale of Griffintown.</i>	collective listening performance	Lucine Serhan	The first and third
15	<i>Paisajes Comunes / Common Landscapes</i>	Community art workshop/ Taller de arte comunitario	Lourdes Peñaranda	The third
16	<i>Harvesting Memories: A Time Capsule</i>	Place-making ephemeral intervention	Hernandez Zavarce	Stefania: The first, second and third
17	<i>Art Terrasse / Teraza</i>	Collaborative canvas	Patil Tchilinguirian and EZ	The first, second and third
18	<i>Terrain Vague, Series No. 1 And Series No. 2 (Proposal)</i>	Public space intervention and performative photography	Denise Olivares	The first, second and third
19	<i>Ghosting</i>	Mixed media photo exploration	Jacky Lo	The third

Source E. Zavarce 2024

## Appendices G| Chapter VI, Imaging Curating Futures

**Figure 62**

*Stickers Horse Place Land. Plain Design.*

Where is the ... —	What is the ... —	Who knows the...
— ... Horse Palace Land?	— ... Horse Palace Land?	— ... Horse Palace Land?

Source: Graphic design E. Zavarce 2023

**Figure 63**

*Stickers Horse Place Land. Clouds Design.*

What is the...	Where is the...	Who knows the...
...Horse Palace Land?	...Horse Palace Land?	...Horse Palace Land?

Source: Graphic design E. Zavarce 2023

**Figure 64**

*transformative futures invitation In-person exhibition at Fonderie Darling*



Exhibition as part of *Imaging a Sense of Place and Community*, Eisy Zavarce, PhD candidate, Concordia University

Source: image: digital collage E. Zavarce,2023, graphic design of the invitation: E. Zavarce 2024

**Figure 65**

*Pictures of the transformative futures vernissage*



Source: Gustavo Galue pictures 2024.

**Figure 66**  
*Nos vamos de Arepada invitation*

# transformative futures

*Imaging a Sense of Place and Community,*  
 Elsy Zavarce, Ph.D. candidate Concordia University

**finissage: 5:30 pm, 16 August, 2024**  
 Fonderie Darling, annex building, third floor



Source: image: digital collage illustration E. Zavarce 2023, graphic design of invitation: E. Zavarce 2024

**Figure 67**  
*Pictures of the final event: Nos vamos de Arepada*





photos: E. Zavarce 2024

**Figure 68**  
*Disruption 18 participation poster exhibition at the Vitrine.*



Art Education Department. Sep-Oct 2024, thanks to Jacob Le Gallai's invitation. Source: E. Zavarce, 2024

**Figure 69**  
*Tool kit for Curatorial SEA as a community-building*

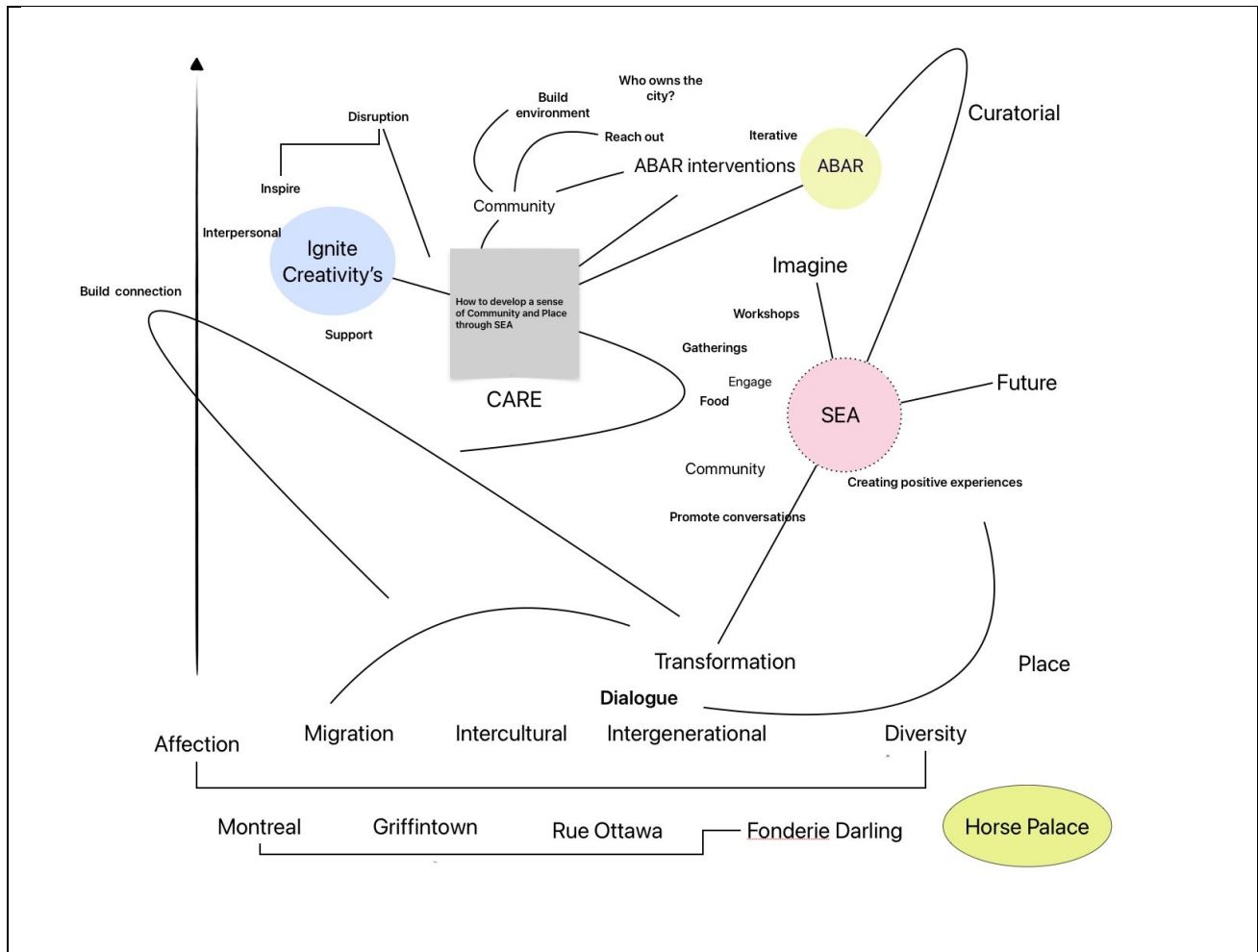
From the implementation of my three ABAR SEA interventions, I propose five moments checklist items to consider in the development of a SEA project in communities (*learning to CARE and take CARE of the community through SEA*, EZ, 2024):

1. Planning the intervention	2. Before the Intervention/activity	3. During the intervention/ activity	4. After the intervention/ activity	5. Dissemination and reflection
------------------------------------	---	---	--	---------------------------------------

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Learn about the community and the context: history, local memories, built environment, socio-economic and demographic data,</li> <li>-Connect with the members of the community.</li> <li>-Go to every event and activity of the neighbour.</li> <li>- Participate in community art workshops.</li> <li>-- Define clear goals and objectives</li> <li>- Establish a budget and resources</li> <li>- Identify potential partners or collaborators (like Fonderie Darling)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepare participant Registration and Consent Forms</li> <li>- Prepare event promotion materials (flyers, social media posts, etc.)</li> <li>-Develop recruitment strategies: networking, personal invitation, etc.</li> <li>- Pre-event survey or Questionnaire</li> <li>- Do not forget to send the inscription confirmation and reminder emails.</li> <li>- Prepare a facilitation Guide and Agenda. Do not forget territorial. Acknowledgement.</li> <li>- Prepare a contingency plan for unexpected situations</li> <li>- Confirm logistics materials and timing.</li> <li>-Consider snacks: water, coffee, tea, cookies, crackers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Icebreaker and Introduction Activities. Always invite people to introduce themselves. Maybe prepare a fun question for it as an icebreaker: Vella et al. (2021) propose fun ideas to invite participants to introduce themselves.</li> <li>- Practice active listening.</li> <li>- Debrief with the participants</li> <li>– Visual Documentation and take notes.</li> <li>-- Encourage participant engagement and interaction</li> <li>- Foster a safe and inclusive environment</li> <li>- Be flexible and adapt to unexpected situations: Remember, an intervention/project may not go as planned. However, embrace uncertainty and learn from it.</li> <li>-Consider Participants as co-creators of a vital community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participant Feedback and Evaluation Forms</li> <li>-. Develop a strategy to keep in touch with participants</li> <li>- Send thank-you notes or emails to participants</li> <li>- Evaluate the event's success and impact</li> <li>-Prepare an outcome report and Summary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Share results on social media</li> <li>- Reflection and lessons learned: Share lessons learned with stakeholders and the community</li> <li>-- Document best practices for future reference</li> <li>- Evaluate the intervention's impact and identify areas for improvement-</li> <li>- Celebrate successes and achievements</li> <li>-•Leverage Institutional Support: Utilize academic and artistic networks to sustain long-term engagement and knowledge exchange.</li> </ul>
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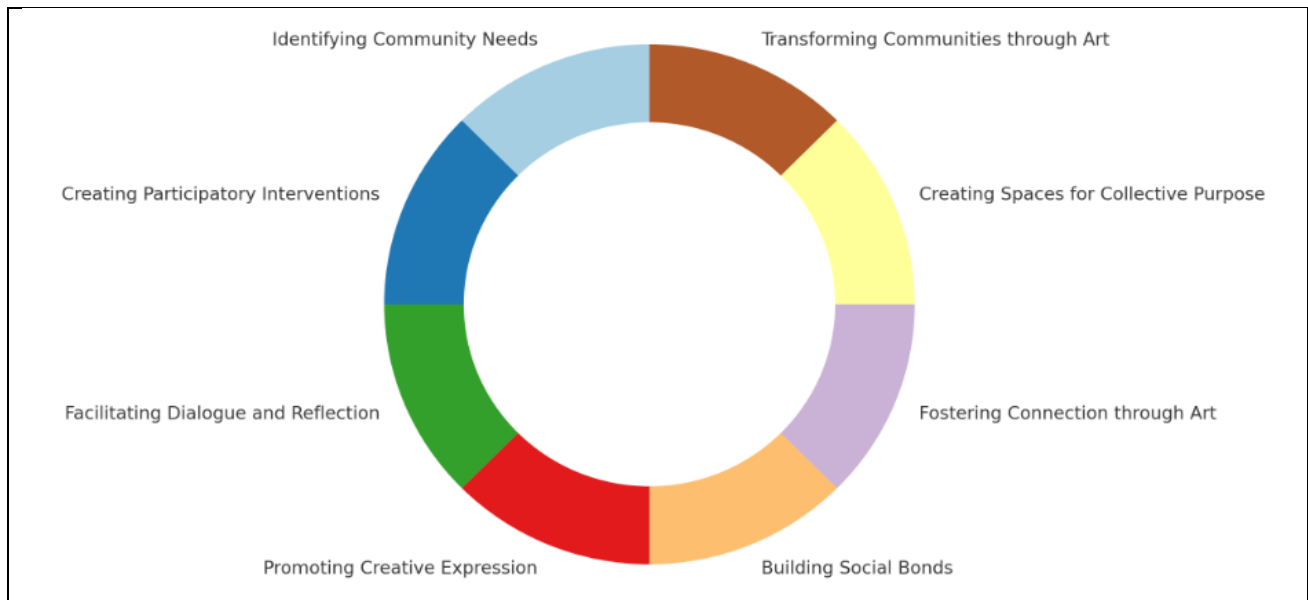
Intervention: Art making/activity with the community. Source E. Zavarce, 2024

**Figure 70**  
*Summarizing the research process of my PHD dissertation*



The Curatorial Practices for Transformative Futures (CPTF) process nurtures, fuels, bridges, and connects to co-create a sense of community and place. Source Zavarce 2022-24

**Figure 71**  
*Curatorial Practices for Transformative Futures" (CPTF)*



Community-centred Curatorial Practices for Transformative Futures: **1. Understand context.** Investigate the cultural, social, and historical background of the place/community to identify unique needs and opportunities. **2. Organize interventions in existing spaces:** utilize strategic environments/ venues (like Fonderie Darling/ Horse Palace land) to stage interventions that foster community engagement. **3. Nurture singularities:** Embrace individual perspectives, talents, and voices, creating an environment where people feel empowered to share their unique experiences. **4. Facilitate dialogue.** Dialogue and collective discussion deepen relationships, foster mutual understanding, and stimulate creative thinking. **5. Inspire creative expression:** Develop art-design-based activities like calls and projects that encourage participants to express themselves creatively and reflect on their ideas and experiences. **6. Reflect and connect:** Provide opportunities for both personal and collective reflection, helping participants to connect their individual stories with the broader community. **7. Build sustainable practices:** Foster lasting connections by encouraging ongoing dialogue, shared experiences, and collaboration beyond the intervention. **8. Amplify the impact.** Document and share the outcomes of the interventions, ensuring the outcomes are accessible to a broader audience and can inspire future projects. Source E. Zavarce, 2024.

## **Appendices H| Disruption Posters**

In this appendix, I present the Disruption Posters. I designed twenty-one (21) posters to briefly overview the eighteen (19) submissions to the Disruption Art/Design Call.

More information on the web page:

<https://elsyzavarce.wixstudio.com/disruptioncall>

<https://elsyzavarce.wixstudio.com/disruption-ii>

## Summary of curatorial themes of Disruption, ABAR third intervention.

### 01 - 05

#### Curatorial Interventions in Public Spaces

CANADIAN POPLAR  
Site intervention  
Horse Palace Land,  
Griffintown.  
Et al. Collective

Poplar Tales  
Sculpture for  
Place-making  
Viviana Murillo-Morales

Hoofsteps Echoes:  
A Tender Tale of  
Griffintown.  
Collective listening  
performance  
Lucine Serhan

Terrain vague, series  
No 1 and series No 2  
(proposal)  
Public space  
intervention and  
performative  
photography  
Denise Olivares

Harvesting Memories:  
A time capsule  
Place-making  
ephemeral intervention  
Stefania and  
Alejandrina  
Hernandez Zavarce

### 06 - 09

#### Understanding Urban Spaces as Cultural Stage: Scenography

I LIVED THERE  
A Testimony  
Natasha Doyon

AT RUE ANN. Journal of  
an encounter.  
LAB IDEAS: Gustavo's  
idea.  
An encounter with  
Gustavo, Margaret, and  
Bev at Bev's studio

La pasión de los  
carpinteros, o todos  
esos lugares donde  
dormí en Eleanor 311 /  
The passion of the  
carpenters, or all those  
places where I slept in  
Eleanor 311  
Video performance  
proposal  
Armando Rivas

Ghosting  
Mix media photo  
exploration of ghost  
tales  
Jacky Lo

### 10 - 14

#### The perceptive experiences approach

GREEN POLE  
a poem, video  
animation, and  
photography.  
Alejandrina Hernández

7 Capturas II /  
7 CAPTURES II.  
CAPTURAS de palabras  
que emanan / CAPTURES  
of words that emanate  
while wandering.  
Alexis Pirela

Reflejos que cuentan/  
Reflections that talk.  
Photography and  
poems of her journey  
Beatriz Lopez

TRAN\$\$\$FORMATION  
photography  
Gustavo Galué

In-Built-Between  
Video poem  
Marguerite Marion-Reyes

### 15 - 19

#### Facilitating communal learning experiences

Yesteryear's Repast  
An immersive culinary  
encounter  
Philomena Collective

ART TERRASSE / Terraza  
collaborative canvas  
Patil Tchilinguirian an EZ

Echar raíces le dicen /  
Put down roots they tell  
you.  
intervention with tiles  
collectively -  
Mariana Sánchez-Hoyos

S'entrelace / Entrelaza/  
intertwines.  
Workshop and action  
art-making call  
Daniel Djuro-Goiricelaya

Paisajes comunes /  
Common Landscapes  
Community art  
workshop/ Taller de arte  
comunitario  
Lourdes Peñaranda



## DISRUPTION

Projects and participations

*Imaging a sense of place and community.*



00

I opened "DISRUPTION" as an open call in my research process to examine how socially engaged art (SEA) can contribute to a sense of community and place. Since I opened the "DISRUPTION" call, it has given me the opportunity to share, provoke, converse, and interact with participants, family, lifelong friends, and new friends in or from Griffintown, Montreal.

I share the contributions to "DISRUPTION":  
Welcome!

J'ai ouvert "DISRUPTION" comme un appel ouvert dans le cadre de mon processus de recherche pour examiner comment l'art socialement engagé peut contribuer à un sens de la communauté et du lieu. Depuis que j'ai ouvert l'appel "DISRUPTION", cela m'a donné l'occasion de partager, provoquer, converser et interagir avec des participants, des membres de la famille, des amis de longue date et de nouveaux amis dans ou à partir de Griffintown, Montréal.

Je partage les contributions à "DISRUPTION":  
Bienvenue !



# DISRUPTION 01



## CANADIAN POPLAR

Site intervention Horse Palace Land,  
Griffintown.

The **Grounddrawing Canadian Poplar** belongs to the Grounddrawings series, which consists of drawings created by tracing shadows. The purpose of Grounddrawings is to raise awareness about the importance of plants in the habitability of the planet and their role in climate mitigation. Plants have been chosen as the drawing theme due to their crucial role in terrestrial life, providing oxygen, shelter for species, contributing to biodiversity, and more.

Grounddrawings critique the scopic view of drawing and transform the act of drawing into an aesthetic experience where the body is inside the drawing, questioning hierarchical authorship. They also serve as a critique of Sol Lewitt's Wall Drawings, both in their vertical layout and hierarchical authorship approach.

Canadian Poplar was created using humus on the ground of a tree, on August 27th 2023 in Montreal.



### Instructions:

- Fertilize soil and use compost.
- Make or buy compost.
- Water compost in containers or using hands.
- Outline the shadow first, then fill in.
- Capture contrasts between real and drawn shadows.
- Take photos at different angles.
- List people involved.
- Consider wind chill and experiences.

**Et al. Collective/ Colectivo Et Al.:** Maricarmen Coello, Francisco, Mavárez, José Antonio Hernández, Alejandrina Hernández, José Andrés Hernández, Elsy Zavarce, María Verónica Machado.

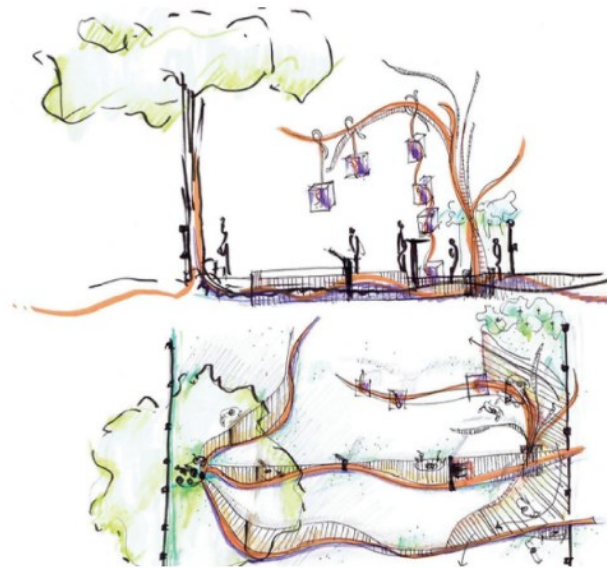


## DISRUPTION 02

### POPLAR TALES

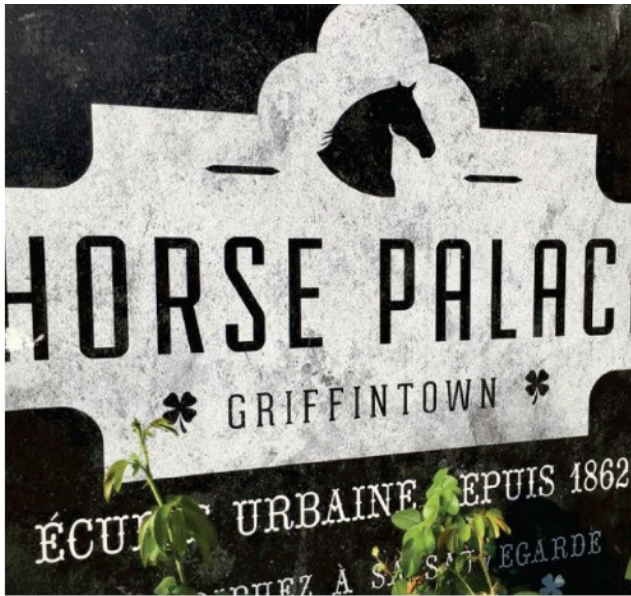
Sculpture for place making

'Poplar Tales' artistic interventions or installations weave together various artistic elements that not only celebrate the poplar tree's resilience in urban environments but also emphasize its multifaceted contributions to our lives. Drawing inspiration from the simple yet robust nature of trees, I have chosen wood as the primary material for the proposed urban furniture. This deliberate selection mirrors the resourcefulness of trees, symbolizing their strength in the face of urban challenges. Additionally, the inclusion of a first installation of my "Stillness | La Quietude" paper sculptures and drawings within the 'Memory tree seeds' serves a dual purpose. Beyond visually representing an artistic process, these elements showcase another by-product of the services that trees provide – the very media in which we create art: paper with wooden coloured pencils. By integrating these artworks into this proposed 'Poplar Tales' installation, I aim to foster a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between art and nature; trees could provide our own media to create. Do we (artists) engage in these reflections?



Driven by my enduring passion for tree-inspired art, I felt compelled to brainstorm 'Poplar Tales,' ideas to solidify an urban design intervention where nature, wood and colour become my medium; ultimately, where these resilient urban trees evolve into characters acting on a true outdoor stage. The proposed place-making street furniture is to be interconnected with an animated coloured sculpture turning this oasis into a meaningful neighbourhood landmark.

**Viviana Morillo-Morales**, arQ RunicoS, is an interdisciplinary artist originally from Colombia, now based in Tiohtià:ke/ Mooniyang / Montréal. Her artistic journey is a testament to resilience and transformation.



## DISRUPTION 03

Hoofsteps Echoes:  
A Tender Tale of Griffintown

Collective listening performance

'Hoofsteps' is a project I aim to create with Elsy as a part of her research. It is an innovative live performance that invites the audience to journey through the echoes of a vanished Horse Palace. Through rhythmic hoofsteps and haunting echoes, the performance transports spectators to Griffintown's historic streets. The addition of archival echo sounds enhances the authenticity of the experience, immersing the audience in the fragmented tales of the past. This performance envisions an exploration of storytelling, bringing between the tangible present and the echoes of Griffintown's past.



'Hoofsteps' is a play on words, combining "hoofsteps" (the sound of horse hooves) with "echoes". In the context of the proposed event, "Hoofsteps Echoes: A Tender Tale of Griffintown" refers to a collective listening performance that revolves around the auditory experience of hoofsteps and echoes, transporting the audience to Griffintown's historic streets.

The term '**Hoofsteps**' is a creative and intentional variation, suggesting a unique and innovative approach to the auditory elements of the performance. It aligns with the conceptual theme of the project, aiming to create an immersive experience that blends rhythmic hoofsteps, haunting echoes, and archival sounds to bring the past of Griffintown to life.

**Lucine Serhan** is a Palestinian, Lebanon-born artist, researcher, and community art educator, living in Tiohtià:ke (Montreal). With a Master's degree in Art Education from Concordia University and a bachelor's degree in theatre from the Lebanese University of Fine Arts



## DISRUPTION 04

Terrain vague, series No 1 and series No 2 (proposals)

Public space intervention and performative photography

*For DISRUPTION, I propose a public space intervention that incorporates concepts of land art, and performative photography.*

*The Horse Palace*

**'terrain vague' series, No. 2 (proposal)**

*I am drawn back to the horse palace, by the presence of the trees that inhabit its surroundings. My artistic endeavour seeks to respond to the essence of these trees, creating a tangible structure that serves as an extension of their natural beauty. In my exploration, I envision an embodied intervention, using the snow, that engages with the trees and the space.*



**'terrain vague' series, No. 1**

In my initial artistic intervention, I found myself immersed in an unplanned and whimsical exploration of space. Using yarn and string, I gathered leaves and twigs, shaping them into a loose bundle. The act of turning and rolling gradually transformed the bundle into an oblong form, that I could cradle within the crook of my arm. It briefly reminded me of how I used to cradle my children when they were babies. Inspired by the moment, I decided to connect the bundle to the surrounding fences using a long red string. After a while, I decided to dismantle the connections. Carrying this entwined creation, I sought out an opening where a tree's bark had split from its trunk. Delicately placing the bundle within, I allowed it to linger for a brief moment before retrieving it.

Back at home, the bundle became a vessel of sensory exploration as I carefully unraveled its contents. The intertwining elements of leaves, wood, and yarn released the sweet aroma of balsamiferous resin with each

**Denise A. Olivares** is a Chilean-born art educator and interdisciplinary artist working and residing in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal. Inspired by her family's history and culture, her textile and installation works focus on themes of memory, identity, and the archive



## DISRUPTION 05

Harvesting Memories:  
a time capsule

Place-making ephemeral intervention

'Harvesting Memories', a Time Capsule Landscape at the Horse Palace, invites visitors on a journey through a meticulously curated environment, where every aspect converges to safeguard and unveil the intricate tapestry of history. The title encapsulates the essence of gathering cherished reminiscences from bygone eras, symbolized by the placement of time capsules intricately fashioned from hay. This immersive venture within the Horse Palace's reimagined grounds offers a harmonious fusion of nostalgia and ingenuity, transforming the landscape into a dynamic tableau for the preservation of memories and the commemoration of equine heritage.



Through the thematic concept of a **time capsule**, this endeavor serves as a transient placemaking intervention, capturing and safeguarding the memories and narratives of Griffintown's inhabitants. By engaging the community in the envisioning, harvesting, and documentation of memories, the project fosters a collective sense of identity and attachment to the urban environment.

**Stefania Hernández** is passionate about using her skills to bring transformative ideas to life. She is an architect and holds a Master of Design from Concordia University.

**Alejandrina Hernández** is a student at the Industrial and Product Design program at l'Écal in Lausanne, Switzerland, and graduated as a Technical Industrial Designer from Dawson College.



## DISRUPTION 06

I LIVED THERE

a testimony

---

*Exploring Natasha's Ottawa Street Experience: A Journey through Time and Place*

*In the early stages of my Ph.D. research, when I introduced the project, its subject area, and the Horse Palace Land to my colleague Natasha, she surprised me with a personal connection: "I lived there!" She generously offered to contribute to my research by sharing her experiences of living on Ottawa Street. This is a short writing of our encounters and her joyful story.*

*On June 9, 2023, I had the pleasure of meeting with my friend Natasha Doyon at a café near Concordia. The purpose of our rendezvous was to delve into Natasha's memories of her time living on Ottawa Street, particularly in the vicinity of the John Moore House at 1200 -1204 Ottawa Street. Our conversation was a nostalgic exploration of her past, brought to life by her vivid and fragmented recollections. (....)*



....Our second meeting on October 29, 2023, served as a wonderful continuation of my exploration,

(...) After a while, we visited the Horse Place Land and immersed ourselves in the whispers of memories and history under the shadow of the Canadian Populus. As we strolled intently through Horse Palace Land, Natasha commented: "How beautiful it is here", ...." they should leave it pretty much as it is; maybe just put some benches ....." Several things stayed with me from that conversation, including something I commented on, that provoked a comment from her: I like that Elsy, you are a space and human ethnographer. I told her I didn't know what she meant, but she said I'd get there... I guess it's something else I'm looking into.

---

**Natasha Doyon** is a PhD candidate in Art Education at Concordia University. Doyon is an Israeli-Canadian visual artist and educator, working with paint, sculpture, and sound regarding narratives, biography, and ideas about belonging.



## DISRUPTION 07

AT RUE ANN. Journal of an encounter

LAB IDEAS: Gustavo's idea.

Our exploration into the cultural complexities of Griffintown continued with a chance encounter at Bev's Pottery studio at 956 rue Ann. Motivated by a conversation with Gustavo Estrada, we embarked on a quest to delve into Griffintown's history and architectural legacy through the eyes of former residents and artists.

Our first contact was Margaret Griffin, a renowned ceramicist and jeweller. An Instagram message led us to an exciting visit to her studio. There, our conversation developed organically amidst ceramic creations, guided by Bev's experiences. We delved into topics ranging from the history of the building and her family's migratory saga to cultural activism and urban challenges.

As Gustavo playfully commented that we needed to revisit the building to assimilate all the information, the Lev family's role in Griffintown's cultural and architectural preservation emerged. Harvey Lev, Bev's brother, was an influential artist and cultural advocate, especially through the Corridor Culture Foundation and the Art en Majuscule gallery.



*Bev ceramic studio - rue Ann*

This rich gathering of anecdotes and stories took place in one of the New City Gas buildings, built between 1859 and 1861, which served as Montreal's first source of electricity, illuminating the city's evolution. John Ostell, the architect responsible for the New City Gas building, was chosen for his expertise in designing large spaces with minimal columns that shed light on the unique architecture. In addition, we discovered Mordecai Richler's relationship with Griffintown. Margareth told us that Charles Foran's book recounts the author's visits to his father's workplace in Griffintown.

**Gustavo Estrada, Margaret Griffin, and Bev Lev** are artists living in Montreal.

## DISRUPTION 08



La pasión de los carpinteros, o todos  
esos lugares donde dormí en  
Eleanor 311/

The passion of the carpenters, or all  
those places where I slept in Eleanor 311

Public space intervention and  
performative photography

*Performance video piece that would be displayed  
on the walls of the lot of the developing 311 Rue  
Eleanor.*

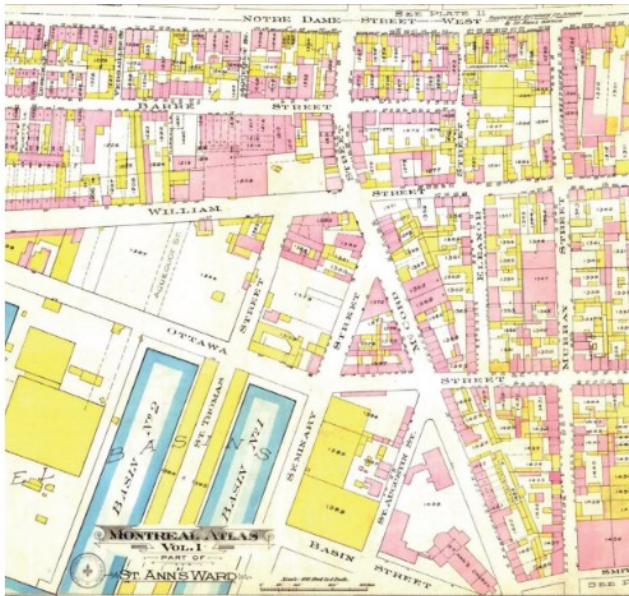
A performance video piece that would be displayed on the walls of the lot of the developing 311 Rue Eleanor. In the video I appear struggling against a large wire that coils itself around me like a snake. For around 6 months this year, from January to June I worked non stop trying to help save my friends business, but instead spent many sleepless months in the cold. Just as we were finishing our big project we had to move out of this warehouse because it was being knocked down. This story is very much disconnected from the horse palace and is ahistorical and meaningless to the rest of the story of the neighborhood, but it marked a very intense struggle I went through trying to complete this big carpentry project that ultimately failed. This was all happening while I was also preparing my big piece 'Dentro del Almacén' and also dealing with immigration trouble, so the building was definitely an important part of my personal history.



'Dentro del Almacén' provides the frame for the video which happens within it, as shown by the screenshots. The fictional golden gate was a metaphor for the building itself, the warehouse referred to in the title. The disruption created by this video is in resisting the forces of gentrification that slowly changes the fabric of Griffintown's neighbourhood. It is also a personal form of resistance in which my ghostly video image refuses to leave my worksite. What I find so challenging about this development is, despite having such an intimate connection with the building, even if it were a negative one, it breaks my heart to see it completely missing, as if everything that happened to me inside it was never real.

**Armando Rivas** is a Venezuelan artist currently migrating to Canada. He is a flunked architecture student turned renegade carpenter and community organizer.

# DISRUPTION 09



Ghosting

Mix media photo exploration of ghost tales

I want to play on the term '**Ghosting**' (a contemporary term which describes the sudden ending of all communication and avoidance with another person without any warnings) with ghosts of Griffintown, as the area is going through changes where will the ghosts go or live? What hauntings will remain and what memories will the community keep alive?



**Jacky Lo (羅嘉俊)** is a Chinese Canadian artist, researcher, and educator from Vancouver of the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh living in Tiohtià:ke/Mooniyang/Montréal, Canada/Turtle Island.



## DISRUPTION 10

### GREEN POLE

a poem, video animation, and  
photography.

Poem by Alejandrina Hernandez Zavarce

Upright posts, guardians of yesterday,  
Numbered plates, logs of forgotten days,  
In an ethereal journey, endless, they envelop me,  
Each number, an echo of intertwined stories.

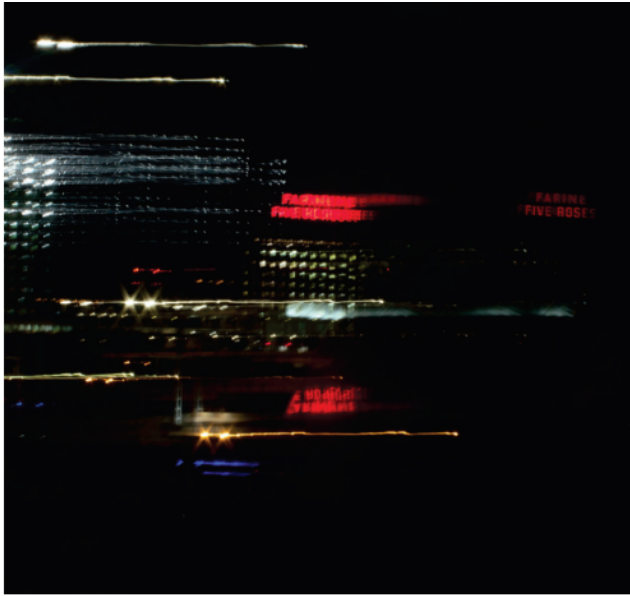
Memories awaken, dance in the air,  
City, a clock of memories, grace, and mystery,  
Streets whisper secrets in hidden corners,  
Wooden posts, silent witnesses of change,  
In their numbers, finding the heartbeat of the city,  
That carries me through time, like an ever-flowing  
river.



Postes erguidos, guardianes del ayer,  
Placas numeradas, troncos de días olvidados,  
En viaje etéreo, sin fin, me envuelven,  
Cada número, eco de historias entrelazadas.

Recuerdos despiertan, danzan en el aire,  
Ciudad, reloj de memorias, gracia y misterio,  
Calles susurran secretos en esquinas ocultas,  
Postes de madera, mudos testigos del devenir,  
En sus números, hallar el latido de la ciudad,  
Que me lleva al tiempo, como río que fluye sin cesar.

**Alejandrina Hernández Zavarce**, a Venezuelan-Canadian, graduated in Technical Industrial Design from Dawson College in Montreal, Canada. She is a third-year student in Industrial Design at ECAL (Cantonal School of Art and Design) in Lausanne, Switzerland.



# DISRUPTION 11

7 Capturas II / 7 CAPTURES II

poems

## The attention and love

A look around awakens awareness  
Being aware induces connection  
Connection creates bonds  
A bond can lead to good love  
I try looking into the detail

## El árbol

Mi aparato perceptivo se estrelló al límite  
en el momento de estar frente al árbol  
centenario  
al límite de lo que no está  
porque aquello no era mi paisaje imaginado  
eran sólo un árbol y un cuento.

## La atención y la querencia

Una mirada alrededor despierta la conciencia  
estar consciente induce a la conexión  
la conexión crea vínculos  
un vínculo puede conducir al buen querer  
Intento mirar el detalle.

*CAPTURAS de palabras que emanar/ CAPTURES  
of words that emanate while wandering*

*The attention and love.*

*A look around awakens awareness  
Being aware induces connection  
Connection creates bonds  
A bond can lead to good love.  
I try looking into the detail.*

Epilogue

We pedestrians have learned to avoid each other without looking at each other, rushing to get the green light. I am part of that mass that circulates with heads bowed 15 centimetres from the cell phone, looking out of from the corner of my eye at the feet of others, immersed in the living process of the renewal of the neighbourhood. I understand that in this cosmos new things emerge that little by little also continue to disappear. Inexorably the city renews its failures and repairs itself like certain lizards when they lose their tail.

(translation by Alexis Pirela)

**Alexis Pirela**, a visitor, foreign to the neighbourhood, a passerby of its corners and visual escapes. She works on the idea of intentional attention to understand and achieve knowledge. Its expressive means are CAPTURES of words that emanate while wandering.



## DISRUPTION 12

Reflejos que cuentan/  
Reflections that talk

Photography and Poems of her journey

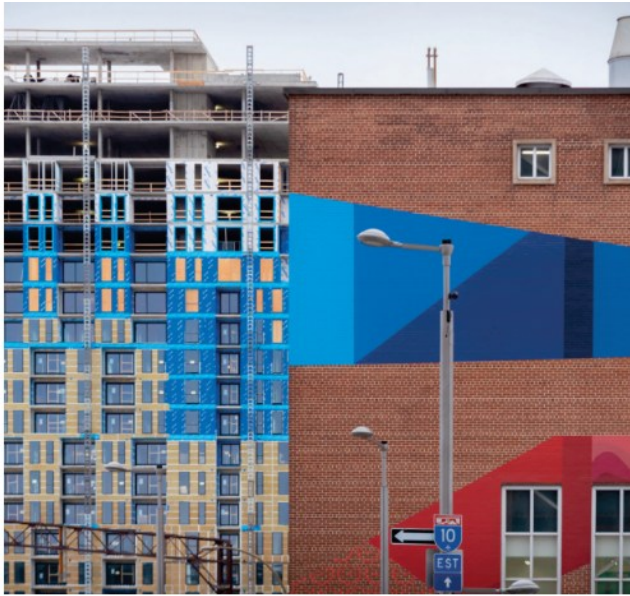
Photographing my journey through the city every day has allowed me to develop my perception of urban everyday life where I see beauty everywhere. For me Griffintown is a kind of time capsule that exploded to make way for the future, rapidly developing into a mini-metropolis within the city. Walking it, knowing its history and seeing its contrasts fill me up with visual poetry! Beatriz Lopez

Miro hacia arriba, aquí y ahora, y siento que el cielo comienza a jugar al escondite entre torres y torres que gritan al viento "estamos creciendo"; El vértigo me arropa y para sostenerme de ese mareo visual bajo mis ojos y aprecio los reflejos que me cuentan otra historia, observo ahora de frente y la luz me devela sus hermosas baladas del pasado. Griffintown!



I look up, here and now, and I feel that the sky begins to play hide and seek between towers and towers that shout to the wind " We are growing"; Vertigo envelops me and to support me from this visual dizziness I lower my eyes and appreciate the reflections that tell me another story, I now look straight ahead and the light unveils its beautiful ballads of the past. Griffintown!

**Beatriz López**, born in Caracas, Venezuela, graphic designer, poet and photographer. She arrived in Montreal in 1995 for work reasons and decided to stay.



## DISRUPTION 13

### TRAN\$\$\$FORMATION

Photography

**TRAN\$\$\$FORMATION** (cynical reference to the appreciation of land prices resulting directly from the political intention of developing a socially inclusive project), it is a series of images of the act of destroying the existing in order to change and rebuild, along with images of what has managed to stay.

I have a special interest in urban phenomena like gentrification and radical transformation. As a resident of Montreal since 2006, I have had the opportunity to live both processes firsthand. I have found that once the transformation of Griffintown was allowed by the municipal authorities, it happened in such a rapid way, that almost seems that it hasn't given the time to its surroundings to adapt to it. This transformation has changed the urban profile of Montreal, and I have transcended the urbanist and architectural context. It has spilled on subjects such as immigration, language, and identity.



Without pretending to attach to this project any accurate historical data, I have chosen to approach it from the pure act of observation through a period of time, extending from 2010 to now. **TRAN\$\$\$FORMATION** (a cynical reference to the appreciation of land prices resulting directly from the political intention of developing a socially inclusive project), it is a series of images of the act of destroying the existing to change and rebuild.

**Gustavo Galué**, is a Venezuelan-Canadian photo-based artist who has been living and working in Montreal since 2006. He holds a degree in architecture and a diploma in photography from Dawson College



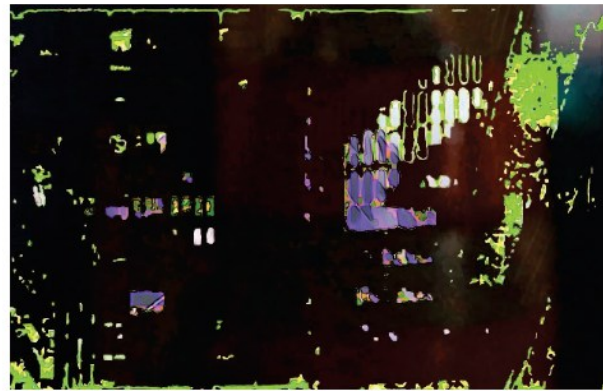
## DISRUPTION 14

In-Built-Between

Video poem

poem by Marguerite Marion-Reyes

Construcción.  
Dejar ir y renovar.  
¿Sobre qué territorios?  
Construcción.  
¿Para quienes?  
De la construcción  
surgen... imaginarios...  
Espacios invisibles  
entre lo visible.  
Espacios  
que nos dejan ir  
más allá.  
De la construcción,  
se imaginan caminos,  
que sólo con el colectivo  
se pueden pisar.



Build.  
Let go and renew.  
Build.  
Over what territories?  
Build.  
For whom?  
Building sparks imaginaries.  
Invisible spaces  
in between the visible.  
Spaces  
that let us go  
beyond.  
From building,  
imagining paths,  
that only from the collective  
one can set foot.

**Marguerite Marion-Reyes**, is a Chilean-Canadian visual artist and educator, with a M.A. in Art Education at Concordia University.



## DISRUPTION 15

Yesteryear's Repast

An immersive culinary encounter

In the ever-evolving urban landscape, a city transforms, donning myriad masks, yet slyly preserving elusive remnants of its former self, tantalizing the inquisitive gaze of wanderers. As we wander along its thoroughfares, these remnants metamorphose into labels, nomenclature, digital archives, contractual agreements, legal proceedings, and licensing permits, obfuscating their origins into near obscurity, rendering them almost unperceivable to our senses.

Yet, for Philomena Collective, we see the perfect setting for a transformative intervention poised to breathe life into one of the most underappreciated forms of artistic expression: dining. A homage to the countless souls who have partaken in such a mundane act throughout the city's ever-shifting epochs. Drawing inspiration from the rich past of Griffintown, notably the Horse Palace Land's historical legacy, we embark on a journey to deliver an immersive gastronomic encounter that seamlessly melds moving imagery, artistic expression, and community involvement.

# Yesteryear's Repast.



Our mission is a conscious curation, one that champions locally sourced produce and fosters the emergence of burgeoning local talents.

Through this blend of history, artistry, and culinary innovation, we invite you to embark on a sensory voyage that bridges the past and the present, offering a glimpse into the soul of this ever-transforming urban tapestry.

**Philomena Collective** Idris Khiri: Chef/ Liam Kena: Sound Artist and cook/ Ally Rosillo: Chef/ Yael Ezerzer: Photography, Chef/ Andrée Uranga: Design



## DISRUPTION 16

Art Terrasse / terraza

Collaborative canvas

### Workshop Proposal

How can Art Terrasse help to develop a sense of place and community?

Two years ago, Elsy and Patil made plans to come together and engage in artistic expression on the terrasse, naming their collaborative endeavor "ART Terrasse." This initial experience proved to be both energetic and spiritually healing, serving as a profound inspiration for the continuation of their artistic exploration. The idea of repeating this creative venture surfaced in their conversations multiple times. The Disruption Art-Design call provided the perfect motivation to turn this aspiration into reality.

Creating art together is a synergistic, communal, and fulfilling experience. "ART Terrasse," conceived by Elsy and Patil, immigrant artists from Venezuela and Armenia, stands as a testament to the transformative power of art in transcending boundaries and fostering unity. Within this creative space, a shared language is discovered that goes beyond geographical constraints, creating bridges across diverse worlds.



The resulting artwork not only showcases the harmonious coexistence of diverse influences but also symbolizes a celebration of unity and mutual support. "ART Terrasse" goes beyond being a mere art project proposal; it reflects the power of collaboration to create something beautiful that transcends borders, embodying the spirit of inclusivity and cultural richness.

Art Terrasse has evolved beyond being an spontaneous creative project; it has become a catalyst for community building, fostering a shared sense of place, identity, and connection. Patil and Elsy aspire to broaden the impact of Art Terrasse within the community, hoping to inspire and engage a wider audience in the transformative power of collaborative art.

### Patil Tchilinguirian and EZ.

Patil Tchilinguirian is a visual artist and graphic designer based in Tiohtià:ke (Montreal), working with print, pixels, and fibers.





## DISRUPTION 17

Echar raíces le dicen / Put down roots  
they tell you

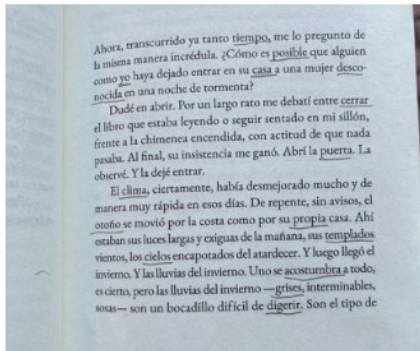
S'entrelace / Entrelaza/ intertwines  
intervention with tiles collectively

an intervention with tiles collectively, maybe  
using the white chips found at Fonderie Darling,  
adding different pieces that neighbors bring.

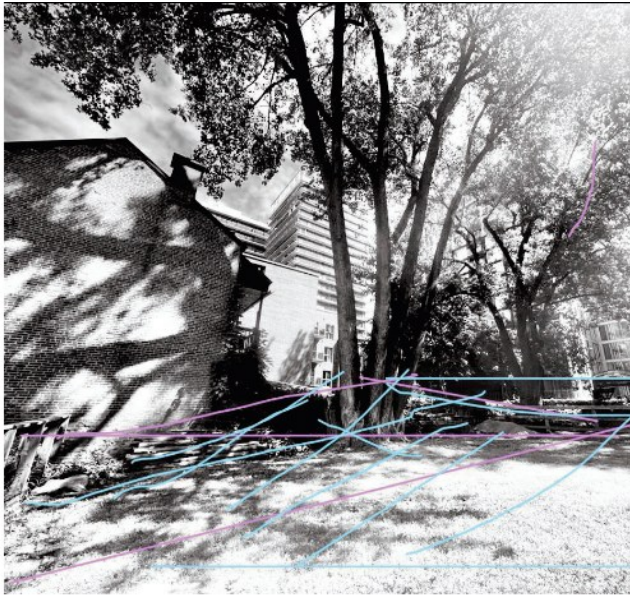
Before leaving for Madrid, where she would  
pursue her postgraduate studies, I went to say  
goodbye to her studio, she gave me some white  
ceramic tiles left by some artist at the Fonderie and  
that she had been told she could use them.



The square-shaped, with white enamel, carefully handmade pieces  
invited us to talk and play with them. She took another group with her,  
and others remained in the Fonderie. it was the beginning of: Echar  
raíces le dicen / Put down roots they call it.



**Mariana Sánchez-Hoyos**, Architect by ITESO. She is an artist, she makes  
her production of ceramic sculptures through the pottery wheel, plaster  
molds, and manual production.



## DISRUPTION 18

S'entrelace / Entrelaza/ intertwines

Workshop and action art-making call.

Weaving is the art of interlacing fibers to create fabric or cloth, often using a loom or by hand.

When different generations unite, a special connection forms as stories are shared, and we pay tribute not just to physical spaces but to cherished memories.

Many places around the world bear the marks of past communities, where the essence of those who once resided there lingers and intertwines with the surroundings.

The S'entrelace / Entrelaza / Intertwines initiative invites the community to collectively honor those who have impacted our memories. Through a collaborative art installation, we aim to weave a temporary web of interconnected laces, paying homage to the remembered individuals.



### Workshops procedure

Start with intentional breathing for mindfulness  
Collaboratively create outdoor art using recycled fabric  
Emphasize sustainability and shared creativity  
Encourage heart-centered focus for impactful art  
Practice mindfulness and letting go through meditation  
Conclude with self-hugs for self-compassion and creative expression

**Daniel Djuro-Goiricelaya** is an interdisciplinary artist from Maracaibo, Venezuela who uses color, natural materials, light, and performance to explore political, social, and aesthetic issues.

## DISRUPTION 19



Paisajes comunes /  
Common Landscapes

Community art workshop/ Taller de arte  
comunitario

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The project Common Landscapes explores the principles of peripheral vision in a sensitive area, aiming to discover fresh perspectives on the local landscape. Through participatory creative activities rooted in local memory, it seeks to facilitate healing processes and foster harmonious interactions within the landscape. By examining various peripheral vision processes, the project prompts reflections on the territory's vulnerability and how different perspectives shape our understanding. Through photography and collaborative drawing, Common Landscapes breathes life into multiple shared landscapes.

### Workshop Details:

The workshop involves collective visual explorations to encourage participants to view the landscape in new ways.

Practical exercises cater to individual processes, local memories, and the shared territory.

Participants collaboratively create a peripheral view of the landscape, fostering creative exchanges through photography, regardless of participants' knowledge or technological expertise.



El taller visual busca explorar nuevas formas de mirar el paisaje y crear colectivamente a través de la fotografía, sin importar el nivel tecnológico. Se invita a los participantes a tomar fotos en un lugar específico y luego construir juntos un nuevo paisaje a partir de esas imágenes, fomentando la reflexión sobre vínculos y valores.

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**Lourdes Peñaranda**, is a multidisciplinary artist, teacher, researcher, architect and landscape architect, her work is materialized through multiple medias.

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1

I selected a picture from my Resilient Gaze series for each chapter's frontispiece. All the images were taken in Griffintown between 2020 and 2022 using my cell phone and an optical lens from Venezuela. I began the series in Lorrie Blair's graduate photography class in winter 2020. The first image I created was for a selfie assignment. At the end of the course, she commented on how much she enjoyed my picture with the glass lens, saying, "The distortion makes us look deeper."

In a way, wandering through Griffintown and capturing images through the optical lens was my way of engaging with the city—deep mapping, worlding, and searching for a sense of place. Although the series was created before I decided on this research proposal, it registers my feelings and serves as my thesis's grounding and questioning framework. It became the prelude. Thanks, Lorrie, for always encouraging reflective and creative impulses—not an easy thing to do, as I know from my experience as a professor.

The story behind the optical lens is significant: I decided to bring some with me when I had to leave my country abruptly. These lenses, made in Canada and exported to Venezuela in the 1970s, hold symbolic meaning. They represent a journey like mine, returning to Canada after a lifetime spent in Venezuela. I was born in Canada but lived in Venezuela until migration brought me back. As a migrant and a returning Canadian, I feel deeply connected to the intricate global relations that shape humanity's constant flows across territories. Through this series of photos, I reflect on those movements and the layers of belonging, displacement, return, fluidity and resilience that define my experience.



2

Photos: Rene Lemieux (group selfie 2022). E. Zavarce (2023, 2024), Denise Olivares (2022), Gustavo Galue 2024, Alejandrina Hernandez (2023), Carlos Chacín (2023)

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Territorial Acknowledgement Concordia University: <https://www.concordia.ca/indigenous/resources/territorial-acknowledgement.html>

At the spring convocation of 2017, Concordia University included a Territorial Acknowledgement at the start of the proceedings. Coincidentally, I retired from Zulia University that same year. At the time, Stefania was pursuing a master's in design at Concordia, so during my visit in the spring/summer of that year, I attended several events at the university. I do not recall precisely when I first heard the acknowledgment, but I felt a profound hope that still moves me every time I reflect. It embodied a reconciliation with the land's past and the aspiration for a better future—a gesture of welcome and inclusion that resonated deeply.