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Roger Lemoine and Olivier Vallerand

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THIRTY YEARS OF ARCHITECTURE IN QUEBEC CITY

TRAVELING BACK IN TIME

BY ROGER LEMOINE*
AND OLIVIER VALLERAND*

The urban renovation movement has radically transformed the landscape of North American cities. While the middle classes are quitting old areas of the city for the comfort of their bungalow, grass and pools, old areas are seeing the destruction of shops, the displacement and relocation of poor populations. The city, with the support of superior levels of government, took initiative by using its power of expropriation to launch bigger modernist projects. These projects led to an urban sprawl, which prioritizes highways and the construction of vast social housing compounds. After few years of this regime, waking up can be difficult. We need to rethink how we see the city, come to terms with the past and create a future in dialogue with it.

The intention of this article is to propose a subjective and documented architectural promenade in Quebec City, by looking at the last 30 years. The love of the city and of people living in it guided the two authors in their quests. To realize this project, they have put their forces together, but most of all, their ways of looking. The first author is a journalist writing chronicles for Radio-Canada, the second is a young trainee in architecture, full of ideas and passionate about his work. True, we have two ways of looking, two worlds where the generalist and specialist meet. That said, we have one common sympathy for a city that one often finds reserved, conservative and immensely beautiful.

Urban renovation out of breath
"One could not say that contemporaries were not aware of how ugly their new environment was: people living in housing towers and new cities never liked them and were never shy to say it when one dared to ask them about it"

Quebec City will no be able to escape the modernist fever of the sixties and its desire to cut all ties with the past to embrace a profound optimism for an economic and demographic future. Inspired by projects happening in Montreal around Expo 67, including the subway and the Place-Ville-Marie,

the group of business men which took power in Quebec City Hall, under the leadership of Gilles Lamontagne, realizes a series of projects making Quebec City an administrative capital and tourist hub. This modernist effervescence, haunted by cement and high towers, doesn't find any adversaries or opposing forces before the arrival of the oil crisis of 1974 and the recession that followed afterwards. From this moment on, society started to question the social and ecological costs of this type of development.

Architecture of the sixties and seventies was deliberately anti-historic. It wanted to break away from the past, in the drawings as much as in the scale of materials. It privileges steel, glass and cement. The contemporary outlook is severe on these bygone days. Some speak of *brutalism*, other of an aggressive hyper-modernism. It is however important to understand the passions of political, media and professional people of the time, all of whom supported this new way of building cities.

At the end of the sixties, Quebec City's political authority decided to concentrate all governing administrative activities on Parliament Hill, in order to give a modern face to the province of Quebec during the quiet revolution. Indeed, the project of Place-Québec, in part realized between 1971 and 1974, reflects the will to revitalize the Capital. Authorities want to create a real estate complex, which will be a kind of integrated city. In collaboration with the company Trizec, an office tower is built in 1971 as well as the Hotel Hilton and a commercial mall, in 1974. The initial project done by architects Webb, Zerafa, Menkes and Housden was inspired by Montreal's Place-Ville-Marie. More modest, the project proposed four towers, among which one inspired by Mies van der Rohe, encircling an animated space with four levels of parking lots and boutiques underneath. People in politics and media were enthused by this project. "A new wind blows over Quebec City. Quebecers have decided to construct a building corresponding to their image, practical and functional, in this hour of great capitals," says a title of *Le soleil*, in November 1969. The hopes are that this project becomes the symbol of Quebec City's modernity.

Place-Québec does not altogether represent the first steps in downtown's transformation. Indeed, between 1967 and 1971, the modernist wave was strong

on Parliament Hill. Few beautiful victorian houses were demolished to give place for the buildings H and J, realized under Evans St-Gelais' plans for the architects Tessier, Corriveau, St-Gelais, Tremblay, Tremblay and Labbé. The buildings are relatively low and look like terraces. The facades of these building are made of concrete buttresses, given them the nickname of « calorifères ».

Completely immanent, these building represent a modernity focusing on flexibility when it comes to interior design – and to the default of the interaction with the environment.

Fiset and Deschamps Architects realized the core piece of this planning of Parliament Hill in 1972 with the help of Gauthier, Guité and Roy. The Complex G, named today Marie Guyart, is a celebration of the Quiet Revolution and of the power of the state in Quebec. The project consists of four blocs linked between them, all of it dominated by a tower of thirty-two floors, all connected by underground pathways and surrounded by a courtyard thought of as a garden, despite of the fact that it's character is utterly inhospitable.

This demonstration of state power of Quebec comes along with the creation of major highways facilitating the commuting to and fro Parliament Hill by car. Then begins the construction of an engineering wonder. The Dufferin-Montmorency highway, realized by the engineering firm Vandry and Jobin for 60 million dollars, had planned a road network passing under the Cap Diamant, to bring drivers on Champlain Boulevard. It is one project that will never see the day. And we still question it, thirty years later. After rejecting a monumental staircase offered in the contexts of the 400th anniversary of the founding of the city, the city is now willing to welcome a theatrical space orchestrated by Robert Lepage and other groups of the region – one that promises to deliver a unique atmosphere.

While in the Upper City we are destroying entire neighborhoods to offer the modernity of a capital to Quebec City, the Saint-Roch area and its economy (for a long time viewed as the commercial heart of the city) loses to the competition brought about by new shopping developments in the suburbs. The team surrounding the mayor Lamontagne and his civic progress proposes to build an open mall on Saint-Joseph Street and to financially support the construction of a Holiday Inn. Realized in 1974, these

two projects are a testament to the will of showing a modern Quebec to tourists. This new hotel is built on a site offered by the city, where the old Saint-Roch convent was located. Built in the middle of 19th century by Thomas Baillargé and made bigger by Georges-Émile Tanguay, the convent was demolished in 1973. Clearly modern, this hotel has a three-story basilaire and a tower of 18 floors, including 225 rooms. Its interesting composition, which marries opposed concrete walls to curtain walls, is a reminder of the projects done by architect Walter Gropius, a pioneer in international modernism. This hotel has changed its names many times. It is now called the Hotel Pur and welcomes a very upscale clientele. The new mall Centre-Ville covers, with its roof and cement structure, most of Saint-Joseph Street between La Couronne Street and Mrg-Gauvreau Street. In its opening in 1974, the political authorities and municipal architects were convinced that this new group will enjoy "an extraordinary appeal that will bring competition to the mall in the suburbs, and might become the jewel of the provincial capital". Unfortunately, it will confirm instead the slow the decline of the downtown core, which cannot compete with the suburban malls, by simply copying them without offering their advantages (large free parking, easy access, etc). After numerous debates, the mall will be demolished at the beginning of the year 2000, in the transformations done in Saint-Roch, by Jean Paul L'Allier's team and his *Rassemblement populaire*.

Rebuilding the City

The tone will radically change in the spring of 1976, when the Ministry of Transportation will propose to become the tenant of the Phase III of Place-Québec. This project foresees the construction of a tower of thirty-five floors, and a parking lot of many hundred places. The population is outraged and voices it. Many committees are denouncing "the architectural massacre of Parliament Hill". The citizens take this opportunity to denounce numerous demolitions such as the dehumanization and congestions as a result of such projects. The petrol crisis and the economic recession prevailing at the moment will force an awareness of the necessity to build another type of city, to develop further our built environment in a more sustainable fashion. This awareness also hopes to correct one of the worse attributes of

this phase of urban renovation. That said, indeed it valorizes the economic development of Quebec City. Nonetheless, it certainly does it at the expense of its poorest populations. Forced to leave Saint-Jean Baptiste and Saint-Roch, these populations are moved to the new HLM towers of Place-Bardy, Marie de l'Incarnation and La Chancelière. In addition, this movement took along the disappearance of hundreds of buildings and shops, emptying the city of its substance. At the end of the seventies, a new approach of urban renovation sees the day. It is one that privileges social diversity, community and commercial developments by its insertion of new architectural projects.

One of the most representative projects of this tendency is the recycling of the convent complex of the Bon-Pasteur, on Parliament Hill. Robert Bourassa's liberal government is predicting to demolish the convent, closed in 1974, in order to build the new Palais de Justice. And the new elected Parti Québécois decides to stop all demolition projects on Parliament Hill. The architect Jean Côté, a pioneer in architectural recycling, is given the mandate to transform the vast convent in seven coop habitations for people living alone, such as single parents or older citizens, all of this without altering the imposing character of the building. Another project, in the name of the Alcoves du Palais by architect Jacky Deschênes, transformed the church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Paix in 38 coownership housing spaces, empty of its citizens by the recent construction of the Dufferin-Montmorency highway. This project marked the beginning of a new area in Quebec City. Instead of living in a conquering modernity, the Quebec region now learns to correct its mistakes, and above all, to live with its heritage.

This new way of doing things is also perceptible in the major urban and architectural transformations inflicted on the Saint-Roch area. Completely altered by the aborted construction of the Falaise Highway (and also suffering from the decline precipitated by the suburban boom) the area and particularly the Grande-Place have seen the hopes of many projects before the team around L'Allier, then recently elected, decided to revitalize this part of the city at the beginning of the nineties. The creation of a contemplative park stands as a breath of fresh air giving a new way of life to Saint-Roch. The surroundings of the park were completed with a mixed

development of apartments, offices and research and government institutions.

Occupied for a while by the îlot Fleurie, a group of artists using this empty space for aborted projects of developments, the lots situated east of the gardens were transformed into a building complex inclusive of apartments, town houses and co-ownership housing by architect André Roy. Roy was able to brilliantly negotiate the ground level unevenness and the change of scale between the new buildings and the ones surviving in the old areas. This diversity was completed by the renovation of the old building of the newspaper *Le soleil* (realized by Gamache and Martin Architects) and above all, by installing three units and the Head Office of the University of Quebec around the park. That constitutes a major contribution which has already given its name to the north side of the gardens. On the east side, Côté, Chabot, Morel, Bernard and Cloutier Architects, and also Dupuis and Le Tourneux Architects have put together the ENAP, Télug and the Head Office of the University of Quebec in two discreet buildings. These two buildings are well articulated and offer a composition revealing the presence of various units in a somewhat contemporary complex well integrated to the old buildings of the company Industrielle-Alliance. On the west side, Gagnon, Letellier and Cyr, and also, Beaudet and Valin Architects, proposed, for the grouping of installations of the INRS, an imposing building engaging, in multiple ways, with the different environment conditions. The city had the brilliant idea to claim the artistic heritage of Saint-Roch. They chose a type of development which follows the planning imagined by architect Emile Gilbert and Associates, of the cooperative of artists, Méduse, located in the dilapidated houses of the côte d'Abraham (at one time referred to as Plywood City), and by inviting the École des arts visuels of Laval University to share their renovated space at the old Dominion Corset (done by Gamache and Martin Architects).

The transformation of Saint-Roch is a successful project. It has already inspired several other projects, among them the International Quarter in Montreal. Other major projects have not been so successful. For instance, the projects to transform Quebec City's old harbour are leaving us skeptical. Completely refurbished at the turn of the eighties, to welcome, in the summer of 1984, the activities

surrounding the commemoration of Jacques Cartier's arrival in Canada, the whole area of the bassin Louise and the Pointe-à-Carcy never really succeeded in finding a stable clientele, or, to convince whomever that the choices made were pertinent. The renovated garages serving to welcome the public have been since almost entirely privatized to house the École navale and the installations for the cruises terminals, all of this closing the public access to the shores. The current transformations to revitalize the old harbour, in the context of the 400th year anniversary of the city, unfortunately looks more like a beauty cure that will offer no solutions to the problems already noticed. For instance, the Agora, which was supposed to disappear, was finally rebuilt for a third time meanwhile the privatization of the embankments to benefit tourism is continued by the construction, in contemporary forms, of a secured corridor.

How to Intervene in Historical Surroundings: From the Place-Royale to Charlesbourg's Library

In North America, the unique status of cities with strong cultural heritage, at once recognized and well preserved, have incidence on any architectural interventions realized in Quebec City. If the consciousness of this architectural history recently arose, it has become more and more important with the years passing. A strong evolution separates the reconstruction projects of the Place-Royale from all the recent interventions. The enlargement of Charlesbourg's Library is an example. It has been modified from an historical reconstitution to a new contemporary creation by claiming its heritage. Architects recreated the contexts of its identity characteristics, instead of doing a simple mimicry offering no resemblance to its real past.

Since it was the first big architectural building site taking into account the city's heritage, it was created in parallel with major projects of urban renovation. The city's economics, in the seventies and eighties, are not only dependent on the modern image that people making decisions in the region want, but it relies on the tourism industry in Old Quebec City. In 1967, the Quebec Government starts the historical reconstruction of the Place-Royale. The residents are forced to leave, and, without any consultation, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs at the time recycles the old buildings into

a seventeen-century décor without considering the existing built environment and its evolution over time. Some buildings, which have a modern appearance during centuries are given the colors of the early colonization, making visitors believe that they were always like that. The authorities want to make Old Quebec City a heritage enclave for tourists, surrounded by the old faubourgs and transformed into a modern North American city. This experience will never be repeated, fortunately. With its costs and impact on the city, it limits its application to a larger scale, but the spirits still subsists in more than a few interventions around the historical sector of Old Quebec City – just to mention the many flat roofs disappearing over the years because they were replaced by copper garret roofs.

The influence of post-modernism is progressively noticeable in the stability gained by contractors in their contacts with the different historical layers. At the beginning of the eighties – since we have eliminated all traces of the past or built new decors – we started to recycle and develop historical buildings in a more contemporary manner. In spite of this habit of developers and people making decisions to recreate an architectural past that often has never existed, some projects are singular by their originality and their subtlety in giving a new language to old existing structures. For instance, the Hôtel-Dieu (despite the upheaval that the construction of its tower generated in the middle of the century) reaffirmed its commitment to research and development by constructing different phases of its research center. A first phase allowed the inclusion of modern laboratories in the ruins of the old St-Patrick Church, damaged by a fire in 1971. This project done by Simard, Amyot and associates, St-Gelais, Tremblay, Bélanger and Beauchemin as well as Bernard and Cloutier Architects, integrates well an imposing contemporary building between the existing stone walls, which were saved, fortunately. It also gives new meanings to the arrow of the church. The more recent building, less harmonious in its integration of different elements, proposes nonetheless a contemporary outlook full of transparence behind the well preserved façades of the côte du Palais. This project (realized by Bélanger and Beauchemin along with Amiot and Bergeron Architects) shows a building well integrated in the context of Old Quebec City,

not by copying it but thanks to an original dialogue with the scale and the materials of the environment.

Two other recycling projects of importance are face to face and around D'Youville Square, which was refurbished in 1988. The reopening of the Théâtre Capitole, in 1992, allowed architects Denis Saint-Louis, Jean-Guy Lemieux and Bernard-Serge Gagné to give the theater its prestige again, by illuminating the singular architecture of that narrow island of theater. The contemporary additions are subtle and create a dialogue with the original and monumental destiny of the place, especially if one looks at the glass addition facing the plaza and creating a clear entrance to this hotel, build within the limitations of old offices. Contrary to the Capitole, the last transformation of the Palais Montcalm in a music house (following the drawings of architect Jacques Plante, Bernard and Cloutier and also St-Gelais and Montminy) has eliminated the old room to build a new space with high quality acoustics behind the maintained façade on D'Youville Square. True, the interior of the auditorium Raoul-Jobin is a great success and the exterior's integration of the old to the new parts of the building gives harmony to the Palais Montcalm, already modified several times. That said, the city and the engineers' approach to the façade, their choice to maintain the original façade even if they were demolishing a great part of the former building, deserves some questions concerning the authenticity of this type of interventions. This project remains nonetheless a more authentic and clear intervention if we compare it with the reconstruction of the old Place-Royale. Indeed, these interventions saved a large section of the flooring in the existing building. And the new auditorium is more like a box hidden behind the historical façade.

Other cultural projects were important in showing our cultural heritage. At the beginning of the eighties, an open contest to build the Musée de la civilisation du Québec brought here an architect of international scope, Moshe Safdie (and the collaborations of Belzile, Brassard, Gallienne, Lavoie, Saugur, Incesulu, Desnoyers and Mercure Architects). This team was able to propose a building clearly postmodern, subtly evoking its environment by integrating historical houses and offering a magnificent point of view on the city and the river, thanks to its roof-staircase. The museum has indeed renewed

the experience of contemporary construction in heritage settings, and a few years later, by developing the Interpretation Center of the Place-Royale. This last project was done thanks to another national contest to rebuild the Hazeur and Smith houses which were burned down by a fire in 1900.

The laureate project proposed by Gauthier, Guité, Daoust and Lestage Architects allows the visitor to walk on site by creating a new staircase splitting the building. It also offers, as one goes by, an historical and architectural interpretation of the site's various functions. This project was also groundbreaking in its contemporary façade on the côte de la Montagne and by its diverse usage of the site, which is home to apartments, shops and museum away from the pastiche of artificial reconstitution which prevailed until then at the Place-Royale.

This discussion between past and present was also the point of many theater projects, which, like the Palais Montcalm and the Capitole, tried to negotiate this encounter between a more or less far heritage and the modern technologies of today's *showbiz*. The architect Jacques Plante authored many of these projects, to begin with the transformation (with his collaborator Marc Julien) of Dalhousie's casern in a space for Robert Lepage's creative company Ex Machina. The architects decided to evoke the mechanism of theater and the mannerist facades of fire caserns by restoring and recopying their casern's contexts. Jacques Plante also developed a subtle play between old structures and contemporary installations in order to give more rhythm to the last refurbishing of the Théâtre Périscope (done by Gagné and Lemieux Architects), and, at a lesser level, by moving the Théâtre de la Bordée on Saint-Joseph Street (with Gallienne and Moisan). At the Périscope, a new lateral foyer allows access to the auditoriums placed in the old synagogue, making a reference to the former old theater. At La Bordée, a contemporary auditorium and a modest foyer are hidden behind a façade at once transparent and lively which connects the pedestrians with the interior of the building. That said, it remained incapable of integrating the façade of the old Pigalle Theater in a convincing manner.

One last recent project, also winner of an architectural contest, makes us understand the actual state of such interventions in historical contexts. The enlargement of Charlesbourg's Library allowed architects Croft and Pelletier to

demonstrate how it was possible to build a modern building within the setting of area that has a unique heritage such as Trait-Carré in Charlesbourg. It did so by creating a subtle and intelligent dialogue with the existing context. Their intervention using raw cement, glass and wood in harmony under a gigantic green roof evokes the agricultural past of the city while diminishing the impact of the Library in order to valorise the old college housing a section of the library and the Church Saint-Charles-Borromée. Its settlement as well as its structure allow to create a dialogue between present and the triangular lineage of the past, forcing contemporary possibilities to acknowledge our heritage without using the pastiche. As signs of the success of these architects' approach and of the importance of contests when it comes to renewing architectural practices, the great luminous and open spaces of the new library are always full of citizens.

To Build for the Future: From Avant-garde Research to Sustainable Development

The architectural contests realized in Quebec City have showed their importance by thinking about the future of the built environment and the arrival of new talents offering new and original modes of expression. Unfortunately, these contests are still rare in the region and limited, to a great extent, to cultural projects when we would like to see public institutions or even habitations for citizens to benefit from such reflections. The success and growths of a young firm such as Croft-Pelletier, in Quebec City, owe a lot to this contest culture. It also reveals how important it is for the emerging alternative practices in the well established and reknown offices which rarely support revolutionary initiatives.

The development of a research industry and technology in the Quebec region, at the turn of the nineties, played in favor of the arrival of another genre of architecture in Quebec City. Often located in parks reserved for technologies in the suburbs, therefore more relaxed than in the downtown core, the enterprises focusing on technology are open for a more adventurous type of architecture because they hope to show their innovative character and to affirm their exclusive image. We can mention parks such as the Laboratoires Aeterna (Pierre Thibault and De Montigny, Métivier, Hébert and Fortin Architects) which are refined

and unique articulations considering the built typology. The different phases of the Institut national d'optique with forms and varied textures (done by few architects corresponding to each of the phases, such as St-Gelais, Tremblay and Bélanger along with Simard and Amyot, then also Amiot and Bergeron with Gagnon, Letellier and Cyr, then Belanger and Beauchemin with Bernard and Cloutier) and the Centre de recherche de l'Est de Forintek (done by Gauthier, Guité and Roy Architects) are testifying to a creative and intelligent usage of engineering wood.

Outside these projects of private research institutes, the recent works of enlargements of few University Medical Centers also show research innovation by its striking architecture. In this milieu, the Hôtel-Dieu has to be a quality project which also respects the environment while staying utterly in the present. Another visible example is the Hospital Center of Laval University with its center for Mother and Child (done by Bélanger, Beauchemin, Gilbert and St-Pierre Architects) and its strong curves advancing until the Boulevard Laurier. The foreseen development of building for research using the parking lot spaces which have access to Robert Bourassa highway west of Laval University campuses, also share the desire to venture into the elite of contemporary architecture and innovation. Such experience is particularly visible in the Kruger building done by architects Gauthier, Gallienne and Moisan, where the resources of engineering wood, as a construction material, testifies to the goal of creating a sustainable building with high quality of luminous and thermal ambiances.

One last preoccupation of the future can be developed in the region and is also quite promising: sustainable development. If the advertising of projects seems to be enormous in the medias, few projects frankly show their environmental pride. Charlesbourg's Library, for instance, is one example to follow. It combines its respect to contexts with a gigantic green roof and valorize natural lighting. The Maison de la culture et de l'environnement, on Salaberry Street, has showed that regardless of limited budgets, one can find ways of being sustainable by transforming the existent building. That said, we will need to see the application of these principles in a general way, by looking at few projects, and mostly, by reflecting on the city with similar criteria: a) to encourage alternative means of transportations by adapting the

"abribus" to our extreme winter conditions; b) by raising the numbers of reserved lanes for buses to see a real advantage when using it, while improving the conditions and the continuity of pathways for bikers and pedestrians; c) to help with mixed development in order to reduce the needs in transportation for long distances and further develop narrower streets, better equipped to retain the rain water, etc.

Most projects presented here come from the cultural and institutional sectors. It is unfortunately not a deliberate choice: we would have loved to present a majority of projects coming from private orders or habitations, but the financial imperatives guiding these projects, most of the time, seem to limit their creators in the development of an architecture interested in creation and innovation. It is important to note that the originality of several of these projects is at times contentious. A case in point is the Saint-Roch area following its renaissance (with the development of La Falaise, Place-Charest parking lots, the Theatre La bordée, the *atelier de roulement a billes*). Fortunately, the architectural evolution doesn't stop with the celebration of the 400th year anniversary. Many great projects announced for the years to come create hopes for better and high quality programs, all susceptible to raise our built heritage. The initiative to launch an international contest to prepare for the enlargement of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec can only make us happy (in spite of the contentious plans presented at the beginnings and that wanted to demolish parts of the convent of the Dominicans), after its successful integration within the walls of the old jail in the Plains. We can only hope that this contest will be more fruitful than one of the Îlot des Palais, imagined as a gift from the Mayor Andrée Boucher to Quebec City, in the context of the 400th year anniversary, and stopped since by her successor. The resolutely modern proposition of laureate architects Bélanger, Beauchemin and Anne Vallières was meanwhile diluted, losing its frank dialogue with the remains and with the environment by coming closer to forms which were more historicists. At the core of the historical quarter of the city, the Hôtel-Dieu hopes to find an innovative architecture to complete and renovate its installations, taking also advantage of the project aiming to finish the area framing the côte

du Palais and what surrounds it. Above all, let's hope that the new architecture tendencies, taking at once advantage of the mixed usages and of a language well adapted to our time, open to sustainable concepts and principles, will appear all over the city. It would reinforce the qualities of the downtown area. It would also better develop our suburbs and the many entrances into the city, as we see it happening, on the Boulevard Laurier, today in full development. ■

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Note

1 See Tony Judt, *Après-guerre : Une histoire de l'Europe depuis 1945*, Paris : Armand Collin, 2005, p. 463.

* **Réjean Lemoine** is an employee of Radio-Canada. He is a journalist and chronicles urban matters since 1997. He has been the municipal councilor representing the Saint-Roch district in Quebec City Hall during two terms, from 1989 until 1997. He was one of the founders of the radio station CKIA-MF and has also contributed to the founding of the review *Cap-aux-Diamants*, in the eighties. He holds a B.A. from Laval University in History (1974), and a master's degree (1980). He was born in Vanier in 1955.

* **Olivier Vallerand** has finished his master's degree in Architecture at Laval University in 2005. His research was on the potential of commercial spaces to stimulate new urban forms. After working for Ayers Saint Gross Architects + Planners in Washington D.C., and for Georges Yu Architects in Los Angeles, he currently works on projects for the firm Gagnon, Letellier, Cyr, Richard, Mathieu in Quebec City. At the same time, he is doing research on creative works, particularly with themes relating to urbanity and contemporary landscape, with the collective 1x1x1- Laboratoire de création.

A SHORT HISTORY OF LIVING POETRY

BY ANDRÉ MARCEAU*

The National Capital of Quebec City has a population of 493 000 people. That makes it the second city in demographic importance after Montreal. It reflects the situation of the vast territory of the province as a whole, with only 7 million people: a low density. One has to mention this "detail" because it is one of the major obstacle to the professional viability of the arts in the province. Let's say that mathematically speaking, this small group of "art fanatics" in a population already small makes it more uncommon. It will become even more the case for disciplines of the arts which, despite the fact that they are considered major or prestigious (such as poetry), are directly interesting to only a small pocket of the population, while the pourcentage diminishes further when we are dealing with innovating practices among these.

Furthermore, Quebec City which spreads out in multiples small urban nests, hides under its wing a somewhat conservative spirit (and preservative?). This is largely motivated by the fact that the City (indeed the oldest city of European colonies in America) belongs to Unesco's World Heritage. Within the bureaucracy, it has for a long time helped the tendency to limit artistic life to its heritage. Indeed, despite the fact that Quebec City is the National Capital, it finds itself victim of the fact that its artists often move to Montreal. This scenario is common to most cities remotely far from their only metropolis. Let's admit it: the National Capital belongs to the *far regions*.

During the last thirty years, if there was some attempts to create an association of professional authors, none of them have lasted significantly. That said, many writers and poets have made Quebec City their home, live and stay there. Indubitably, it creates some viable and durable offsprings. The city has notably become, in the last thirty years, an ardent foyer for the *arts actuels* in the province, thanks to the diversity and dynamism of centers for artists. It is therefore not surprising that *Le Tremplin d'actualisation de poésie* (TAP) was born there more than elsewhere (like in Montreal, the metropolis, or Trois-Rivières even, the capital of poetry). It offered new grounds for poetry based on oral tradition, the scene and performance. In

this respect, for the last ten years, TAP and its founder (the author of this present essay) proposed and defended an approach of poetry *actuelle* – mainly in Quebec City. It begins to be known all over the province. Two terms have been elaborated by TAP. First, there was a king of *performed poetry* where the writing process meets the partition in order to force the poet into a performance situation (where the body and the language are put to the test). Second, there is a form of *living poetry* which encompasses more generally all kinds of poetry performed in live scenarios (scene, audio and *in situ*). It also includes performed poetry, oral poetry (or the spoken word) and the *slam*. Since this article is part of a summary dedicated to the last thirty years in Quebec City, let's start at the beginning, that is, thirty years ago.

Few Important Landmarks

1978 – and the future years – was a landmark moment on the art scenes in Quebec City, precisely because it has seen the births of centers for artists whom, while proposing new ways of functioning, were destined to one or the other in visual arts. Many among these have become noteworthy institutions because of their their vitality and lasting commitment to the arts. That said, we will give importance to the ones that have given a space to *living poetry* in the city. Evidently, a number of events in poetry have been, at the same time, presented here and there and under diverse circumstances in Quebec City since the seventies. And they have contributed to promote poetry *actuelle*, in the heart of the National Capital.

Inter, art actuel and Le Lieu, centre en art actuel

The review *Inter, art actuel* began in 1978, first under the name *Intervention* (creating at the same time the Éditions Intervention). That said, the active artists forming a group around it organised few events. As a result, following the philosophy of the review *Inter, art actuel*, Le Lieu (a center in art actuel) was born in 1982, offering a program that was radically opposed to the art traditions in Quebec City at the time. For instance, the *Marathon d'écritures* held for 76 hours, in 1983, in the middle of the Mall Place-Fleur-de-Lys, which gathered a great number of writers (most particularly poets) and artists from the region and elsewhere in Quebec City. Then, in 1984, two international