A Short History of Living Poetry

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"abrius" 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 sector, 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 them time consuming, 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 Faisale, Place-Charest parking lots, the Theatre La bordsée, the atelier de roulement à 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 of Quebec can only make us happy (in spite of the contentless 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 ilot des Palais, imagined as a gift from the Mayor André 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 côté 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 improve 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.

References
Thematic issues of ARQArchitecture-Québec :

Note
2. Réjean Lemoine is an employee of Radio-Canada. He is a journalist and chronicles urban matters since 1967. 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 CKX-MF and has also contributed to the founding of the review Capitale-Occident, in the eighties. He holds a B.A. from Laval University in History (1974) and a master’s degree (1980). He was born in Quebec in 1955.
3. Olivier Vallerand has 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 Gehry Partners 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 an 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 percentage diminishes further when we are talking about 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 Euramerican 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 institutions because of their high 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, in 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 Editions 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’expériences held for 24 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...
manifestations imposed an extreme approach to poetry, one which Quebec City's population was always allergic to (we have to remember how Claude Gauveau was welcomed by the public 15 years earlier). There were events such as Néosphonique (Cabaret: Festival d'Intervention 1) and in memoriam Georges Matouzis. On the contrary, both events showed that the wind was changing in a province more open to various projects, including the augural « bascule des arts actuels » in poetry. Both festivals became interested in pure performances using almost no words and valorizing the body, images and objects which, once in action, transcended linguistic barriers. In return, most of the meetings following were counting on the presence of performance poets coming from the francophone world. And Inter/Lie/Lieu would continue with some events related to poetry. We can name here the performances of Le 9, organized by Pierre-André Arcand (in 1987) or at the sixteenth edition of the prestigious Festival Polyphonix in Quebec City, in 1991. Over the years, it is also important to say that Le Lieu offered precious help to groups, by its active collaborations and by proposing poetry activities in sound and performance, like Obscure or Réparation de poésie.

Obscure
This association has closed 10 years ago. It was dedicated to the production of art actuel. It believed in « variable geometry » in artistic explorations. It was also able, between 1982 and 1995 and despite its undisciplined spreading, to land few milestones in the establishment of living poetry in Quebec City. Among the shows and multidisciplinary or multimedia events presented by Obscure, a place was occasionally reserved for poetry (mainly sound poetry and poetry in action). Otherwise, many of the association’s propositions asked for the collaboration of other groups. They allowed to cover larger ground aesthetically. All of this while bringing together many of the milieu’s artistic agents in the realization of a common projects – and to be part of one of the most stimulating operations.

Folie/Culture
Folie/Culture was born in 1984, bringing together two domains not as far apart as it would appear – Mental Health and Culture (or art) – thanks to the initiative of two passionate people: Paul Morin (part of the collective Autopsie, defending people who have spent time in psychiatric hospitals) and Gilles Aréau (from Obscure). This association was consequently devoted to mental health issues and their applications in society and art (or vice-versa) more than to a precise form of art. It has regularly integrated poetry evenings among the variety of discipline presented in its program. At first inclined towards the « festival à type of events until the mid-nineties, Folie/Culture presented events on a bi-annual basis. The association offered a diversified program over the period of a whole year. To this day, Folie/Culture presented about a dozen of poetry evenings in Quebec City, generally following an hybrid form between performance, music and postage. On the other hand, the association has published nine opus of its Cahier Folie/Culture over the years. The majority of its texts are dedicated to poetry, all of it amalgamated with visual works. Each issue of the Cahier forms a box object by its relation with the most unexpected objects, such as kleeneaux boxes, hospital scarfs, bread bags or even First-aid kits.

Réparation de poésie
Founded in 1986 by Jean-Claude Gagnon, Réparation de poésie was the first association in Quebec to be completely dedicated to poetry and its avatars, such as postal art. Its mandate consists of creating and stimulating relations between poetry and the visual arts while implementing postal art in Quebec City. Between the years of its inception and the beginning of 2000, Réparation de poésie was able to present (thanks to Le Lieu’s support and other artists groups) a bi-annual festival called Réparation de poésie. This festival included an evening of poetry and performance, an exhibition of visual poetry and a workshop on nature poetry (an activity seeking to "confound nature and poetry"). Each of these activities regrouped an important number of participants. Evenings or other types of activities were sometimes organized by the association members. At the same time, for the last 10 years (and realized on a yearly basis) Jean-Claude Gagnon was the director of an artists' book called Réparation de poésie.

This book published together the visual arts, poetry and postal art of about 40 artists coming from Quebec, Canada and around the world. Réparation de poésie has also presented several exhibits of postal art in one or the other of the many libraries in the city, particularly in the contexts of the Manifest d’Art. Since eight years, if Réparation de poésie has limited its activities to artists books and postal art, it remains an essential vehicle working for the dissemination of both, living poetry and Quebec City.

Avatar
Active since 1993, this non-profit organization dedicated to research, creation and diffusion of audio and electronic arts has been flirting with poetry and poets at one of the other of its events until the mid-nineties, installations, shows and radio programs (focusing on sound experiments). It also counts few sound or electronic poetry CDs in its growing discography. Even more. Avatar is not directly related to the poetry world, this organization is viewed as an allied center by contributing to living poetry's visibility.

Poets of French America
Since 1996, the corporation Poètes de l'Amérique française (Poets of French America), directed by the poet Guy Cloutier, presents eight concert/recitals during the whole year. This series is known as the series "Folies/Folies". They have reach several editions since then, including collaborations with TAP, the center Jacques-cartier and the Tam Tam Café. They have reach several editions since then, including collaborations with TAP, the center Jacques-cartier and the Tam Tam Café. They have reach several editions since then, including collaborations with TAP, the center Jacques-cartier and the Tam Tam Café. They have reach several editions since then, including collaborations with TAP, the center Jacques-cartier and the Tam Tam Café.

Le Tremplain d'actualisation de poésie (TAP)
Beginning its activity in 1998 with living poetry evenings presented monthly (known as The Fridays of Poetry) and a magazine called Réparation de poésie (Poets of French America), the collective has operated a transdisciplinary unfurling of poetry: living poetry (oral, performed and audio), visual poetry, and evidently literary poetry. As its name indicates, TAP is dedicated to poetry's actualization (actual meaning in this case "which relates to the act"). It is a type of poetry that implicates a performative aspect. This organization has put together the notions of living poetry and performed poetry in order to designate a type of poetry solely created for oral events (on the scene or on CDs or in situ). The association is proud to be its best advocate in Quebec City.

Each second Friday of the month (ten months per year), The Fridays of Poetry produced evenings dedicated to performances of poetry-borders with TAP, the center Jacques-cartier and the Tam Tam Café. They have reach several editions since then, including collaborations with TAP, the center Jacques-cartier and the Tam Tam Café. They have reach several editions since then, including collaborations with TAP, the center Jacques-cartier and the Tam Tam Café. They have reach several editions since then, including collaborations with TAP, the center Jacques-cartier and the Tam Tam Café. They have reach several editions since then, including collaborations with TAP, the center Jacques-cartier and the Tam Tam Café. They have reach several editions since then, including collaborations with TAP, the center Jacques-cartier and the Tam Tam Café. They have reach several editions since then, including collaborations with TAP, the center Jacques-cartier and the Tam Tam Café.
editions of “Urban Sinecure” offering the first poetry evening at the Ilot Fleurie, under the access roads to the highways called: “La poésie se pête les bretelles.” Other evenings took place in the stairs of La Chapelle Street (the access road to walk up or down between the Upper and the Lower City), in parking lots, on the streets, on the steps of the Saint-Roch-Church, at the Saint-Roch marina, in the interpretation center of the Saint-Charles river... just to name a few.

Le Front de réappropriation locale des poteaux (FRLP) is a branch of TAP. Between 1998 and 2002, it performed poetic manoeuvres encompassing many aspects: political, urban and informative (communication). It has also been involved in poetic actions and activities realized in the context of the town Quebec City. The final objective of the manoeuvre was to promote the agents’ rights and local residents to post information about their local activities in their respective areas such as wall surfaces viewed as “urban trash” (telephone stanchions, barricades, and panel wood fences). All of these manifestations were for a local reapropriation of them. An article on the birth of the FRLP was published in the review Inter, art actuel (« L’oeil à la coupe: Pour une écologie des poteaux » n° 77, p. 60). Among the branch’s activity, we can mention the four editions of Exposition Saint-Roch (happening before the refurbishing of the old commercial area downtown) and two Walks for Poetry (the Périphéries des poteaux and the Procession des poteaux).

More recently, Le Tremplin d’actualisation de poésie (TAP) Importé Slam de poésie in Quebec City, by getting together with the Ligue québécoise de Slam (LQGS) and also with the help of Slam cap, which was in its second year. One game was presented monthly according to the customs and rules of the various leagues in the United States, England, Canada and France.

Over ten years, TAP has proposed more than 200 poetry activities to Quebec audiences: evenings, shows, exhibits, performances, writing workshops, which contributing to raise poetry’s visibility and vitality. Aside, TAP created two small publishing houses of the “zine” type, cumulating twenty small books (each of them representing one poet) as well as a printing house for CDs of oral, performed or audio living poetry. It’s now producing its 50th publication.

Rhoizome Productions
Founded in 2000 by Marc Doucet (a sound creator) and Simon Dumas (an author) – and that many other creators in literature, media arts and audio arts have since joined – Rhoizome Productions “is motivated by the desire to give a place to the author in public more completely than traditional venues of presentations of authors and texts (done mostly by conventional poetry recital or with music)” (source: Rhoizome Productions). During their last six years of experience, the team developed three series of shows, all different in the way they engage. You have respectively Formes, Phénomènes et Syllepsose. Formes is the oldest. That said, if productions were seduced at the beginning by "multimedia theater", their shows have changed more and more media technologies performatively during the last years. They have brought literary events closer to art actuel. They are real literary events because, on each occasion, the whole show is about an author (or more) and his or her multimedia theatre. Since 2000, this enterprise realized no less than fifty literary activities – for the most part, in one or the other of the mentioned series – in Quebec City and in other cities of the province (like Montreal) or in few cities of Europe and Mexico.

The Editors...
Only fifteen publishing houses (licensed) are operating in the greater Quebec region. Even if there were few attempts during the last 30 years, only one publishing house (le Tremplin d’actualisation de poésie) was able to survive significantly: Le Loup de Gouttière. Born in 1989, Le Loup de Gouttière always gave priority to poems from the Quebec City region. It was sold in 2008 (after almost 20 years of existence) and became Cormor Editions. For editors in the margins, publishing reviews or small books of the “zine” type, there has been many attempts, but in less numbers were the ones essentially dedicated to poetry. We can mention here the most recent. As far as the reviews are concerned, we have Le Corréolé (about six issues) and L’Arc (about 15 issues), for the poetry collections. We have the publishing group Poésie Combattante (with five publications, mostly collective, since 2002) and the ones of Le Tremplin d’actualisation de poésie since 2001 that is Tilt (short poetry such as haikus and sneryds, with nine publications) and Les croquemots (poetry in verse with ten publications) and La Revue des invisibles (poetry books focusing on oral tradition with two publications). Although they are not distributed in the libraries, 200 copies (on average) of these publications are sold each time, yearly. This is a satisfying result if we compare it to sales of official editors which are often lower. That said, in all these cases we are talking about literary poetry more than living poetry. In this respect and considering what would be the closest, examples are rare. We have to remember the yearly publications or more occasional publications of artists books such as Réparation de poésie (with 19 issues) and the Cahiers Folio/Culture (with 9 issues). On CD, intervention, Avatar and Obscure have occasionally released sound poetry, mostly with the time with publications covering more ground.

On CDs, intervention, Avatar and Obscure have occasionally released sound poetry, mostly with the time with publications covering more ground. We will have to wait the best of it.

Le Tremplin d’actualisation de poésie with its label Réserve phonique to see the appearance of exclusive CDs of living poetry (spoken, performed, audio and sound) as follows: Mot(s) amachés du corps: Anthologie de la poésie vivante de Quebec (17 poets of the region, 2004); Des Montres dans la gorge: Poésie transmissible radiophoniquement (double CD which includes 30 poets from Quebec City, 2005); Urbine n°: Informe (pilot issue of a review still to be born, 2006); Pop sac-à-vie (solo CD of living poetry and slam, 2007). A double album is currently in production and will promote thirty poets coming from three different regions in Quebec (Quebec City, Montreal and Gatineau), thanks to the organizations holding living poetry events in their respective regions.

On the radio, since 2001, TAP makes sure that living poetry is heard on a weekly basis (on radio frequency 89.3 of CKRL, in Quebec City) with a program about “poetry transmitted by radio” and produced by the authors of these stations.

To conclude, we can mention that at the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ), poetry is always solely perceived as a literary discipline. The needs for a scene aesthetic (because of oral, sound and performance elements) are considered mostly has a way to promote books. There is still a lot of work to do to make sure living poetry gets the recognition it deserves as a discipline in itself amongst the arts, and to make sure it remains alive in Quebec City and the province. In this regard, Le Tremplin d’actualisation de poésie is a pioneer because it promotes what we have called living poetry and performed poetry through its various activities.