

In Between Urbanism in Montréal: Encounters Between Communities  
Across a Transport Corridor

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Architecture

at

Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
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**DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY**  
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I dedicate this thesis to my mother who I miss incommensurably.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to develop an architectural zone for contact between two boroughs in Montreal: Mont-Royal and Rosemont-la-Petite-Patrie; these boroughs are divided by the Canadian Pacific Railway as well as the Van Horne viaduct.

Empty lots along the the fringe of the railway are used by the artistic population, which has appropriated the industrial buildings and empty lots that border the rail line. Citizens also use informal passways to cross the railway and viaduct. The proposal of this thesis is to develop an urban space that will improve social cohesion and encourage unfettered access, by setting up safe crossings and encouraging the spread of arts and culture without changing the character of the site.

The focus of this project is to support and develop, through architectural design, the social interaction that people create. It also aims to create an architecture of resistance to preserve the informal residual parks that border the railway.

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I want to thank Bev, Susanna, Martha, Ken Kam, Pat Kelly, Maggy and Lourdes, for their encouragement and help.

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I want to thank all my friends that helped me reach the summit of my thesis and mostly for still loving me considering my bad character! Étienne, Stephane, Martin, Stephanie, Karl, Amanda, Jessica, and Paul: from the bottom of my heart, thank you!

For all the rest of my family, friends and schoolmates: thank you for your generous support and helpful comments!

And finally I want to thank my partner, Felix for his patience and staying beside me during this crazy journey that made me ultra grumpy!

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Question**

How can architecture stimulate encounters between an alternative population and the general public, without deteriorating the special character of the site?

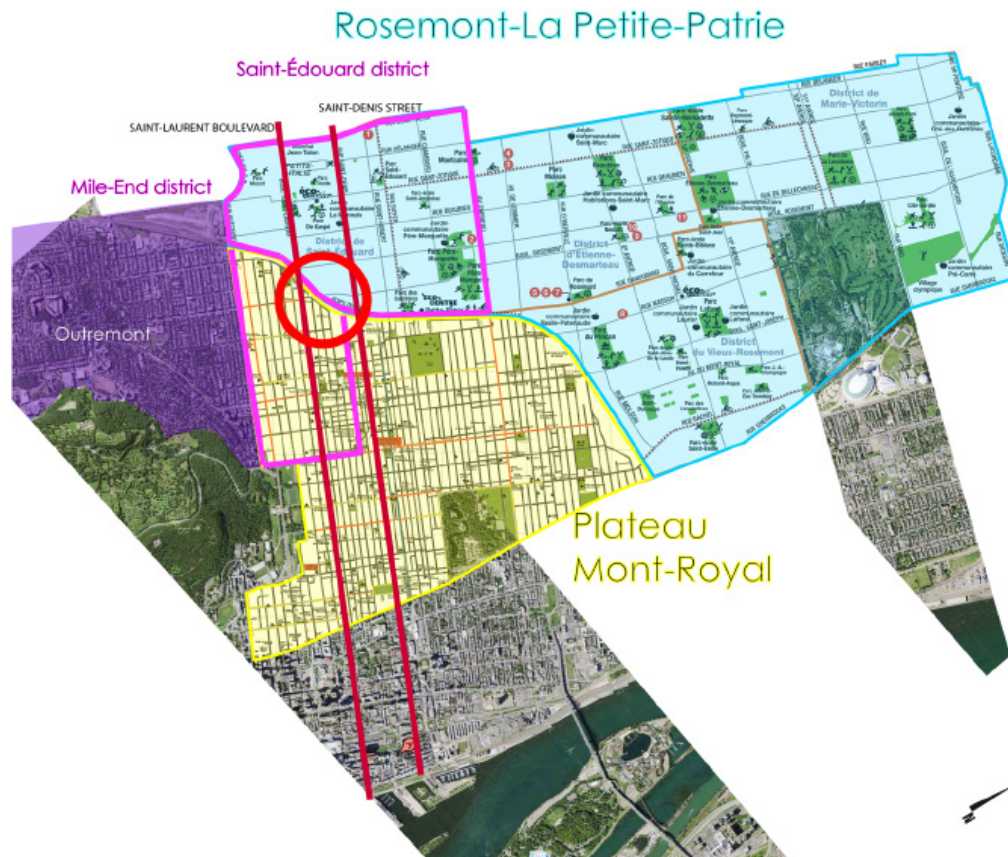
## The Site

The site is on the island of Montreal, at the intersection of two neighbourhoods:

- Saint-Edouard, which belongs to the borough of Rosemont-la-Petite-Patrie
- Mile-End, a section of the borough of Plateau Mont-Royal.

These two districts have the smallest surface area of green space in their respective boroughs.

The site borders the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Rosemont-Van Horne overpass. It is located in the midst of a transportation hub, between two major avenues of the metropolis: boulevard Saint-Laurent and rue Saint-Denis. These characteristics make pedestrian access to the site and across it very difficult. As a result, the site is isolated from its adjacent boroughs and it developed a distinct identity and unique characteristics and features.





## Site Chronology

1878: Inauguration of the railway.

1892: Inauguration of the streetcar on boulevard Saint-Laurent. Public transportation stimulated worker immigration to the area, including a significant Italian community.

1896: Arrival of the Carmelite religious order.

1900: Development of a sorting area to serve the surrounding industries.

1900-1930: Growth of the working-class neighborhood.

1900: The covered rink known as Le Rodéon attracted a large number of regulars. This space was later occupied by municipal workshops (which closed in the summer of 2005).

1918-1939: The interwar period witnessed the restructuring of the railway companies, and as the automobile era emerged, the car became the primary focus in transportation and urban development. The railway experienced decline as short distance deliveries of merchandise were accomplished by trucks.

1945-1970: Arrival of the textiles industry with giant structures on De Gaspé. Streetcars were abandoned in favor of buses.

1960: Construction of the local (orange) metro line.

1969: During the construction of the Rosemont–Van-Horne overpass, the facilities to maintain and shelter the streetcars were torn down.

1972: Inauguration of the Rosemont–Van-Horne overpass

1970: Transportation of containers by railway over a length of 2 kilometers (20 convoys per day at a speed of 20 km/h).

1970-90: Progressive deindustrialization and emergence of the communications sector

## Site History

The industrial areas of Saint-Édouard and Mile-End owe their existence to the arrival of the railroad in the 1870s. Large warehouses and factories were built around the turn of the century. In the 1950s and 60s, the urban fabric of Mile-End developed into its present form when large garment factories were built along Rue de Gaspé.



De Gaspé Buildings

Over the span of decades, de Gaspé was a dynamic hub of textile manufacturing. However, in recent years, the number of companies has declined.

In the mid-1990s, Ubisoft moved its studios into an old industrial building at the corner of St-Viateur and St-Laurent, breathing new life into a district that had relied on an increasingly moribund textile industry. In just six or seven years, the number of artists, musicians and arts and design related enterprises in the area have multiplied. Now one-quarter of the industrial buildings on Rue de Gaspé have artists as tenants. This is a neighbourhood in flux, as it has experienced a rapid rejuvenation and a tremendous increase in the value of apartments and condominiums. While in earlier times it was an area known for its immigrant community and its famous St-Viateur Bagel Shop, it is now better known as a district where a youthful population works in the world of design, media, film and television.

The Saint-Édouard district has been greatly affected by the decline of employment in industrial sectors and the shift to a post-industrial economy. Various factors have contributed to this situation, including foreign competition – particularly in the textile and garment industries – and the location of new industries along the highways rather than railways. Nevertheless, the Saint-Édouard district attracts everyday an impressive amount of people to its major commercial areas, particularly the plaza Saint-Hubert, Jean-Talon market, and the boulevard Saint-Laurent. It remains ethnically diverse: in the 1980s, it continued to welcome relatively poor immigrants in the Italian neighbourhood of Little Italy, and in the Vietnamese and Latino communities.

## Biome: Artistic and Cultural Ecosystem

This map shows the relation between different communities indicated with circles, places of attraction, dots, and continuous pedestrian circulation routes. Yellow refers to daytime and purple indicates night time.

### the BIOME "artistic and cultural ecosystem."

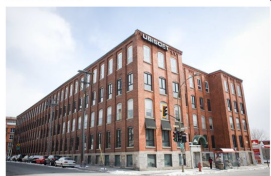


Canadian Tire Home Depot

Jean-Talon Market  
Plaza St-Hubert  
Latins  
Portugais  
Asiatiques



With the arrival of Ubisoft, the neighborhood has experienced a rapid rejuvenation and a tremendous increase in the value of apartments and condominiums. Before it was an area of immigration, it is now better known for his youth population working in the world of design, media film and television.



UBISOFT

Casa del popolo  
Sala rosa  
Club espagnol

Tam Tam's

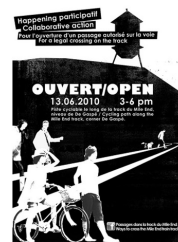
The industrial function, concentrated along the railway is mainly composed of manufactures of textiles and clothing, warehouses and food wholesalers.



Graffiti artist are pleased with the freedom they find at the site. For them it is like Paradise!



A poor road network: The site finds himself isolated because of its periphery: he is in between Saint-Denis and Saint-Laurent, major streets not easy to cross, plus the railroad and the viaduc does not facilitate access to the site.



It is a very dynamic environment and rich of culture. the Mile-end is with the rest of Plateau Mont-Royal the largest concentration of artists in Canada. La Petite-Patrie is a very rich in cultural variety : little Italy - Latino - Asiatique and Portugese commerces, restaurants etc. More than anything, the site is **THE LAND of the GRAFFITI.**

Residents of the boroughs encourage the City of Montreal and Canadian Pacific to find a solution to traffic problems that exist between the two districts caused by the railroad between them.

Pedestrians and cyclists are accustomed to cross the CP tracks by cutting along the fences to avoid a detour overpasses that provide links north and south.



## Transportation Network



Map: City of Montréal

The road network is essentially an orthogonal pattern. Boulevard Saint-Laurent is known as the “Main” and is in fact a central avenue in the Montreal network, crossing the railway tracks. The overpass had to be built because this avenue would have crossed the railway tracks.

Cars and trucks are the most common means of transportation on the site. Public transportation is more present at the edges of the site, such as the Rosemont metro on the orange line and several bus lines (with a night-time circuit on Saint-Denis and Saint-Laurent). The main lines fulfill two roles: serving busy transit lines and commercial arteries. This means ever-present congestion during rush hour.



The viaduct over the railway

## Pedestrian Network



Informal passageways  
Photo: Google Maps

Pedestrian and cyclist traffic are an important feature of the site. The sidewalk on the overpass tends to be ignored by pedestrians who seek out informal passageways across the railway tracks. Residents of the area habitually use these passageways, and unfortunately the police have opted to coerce people not to use them by imposing fines.

For many years, pedestrians and cyclists are accustomed to cross the CP tracks by cutting along the fences to avoid a detour overpasses that provide links north and south. According to the regulars in the industry, these viaducts are poorly suited for cyclists and pedestrians and are particularly feared in the dark.

«People are starting to be fed up, indicates Nathalie Casemajor, one of the responsible of the protest. We hope to draw attention to this urban planning problem, so that a solution will be rapidly found.» (Guthrie 2010)



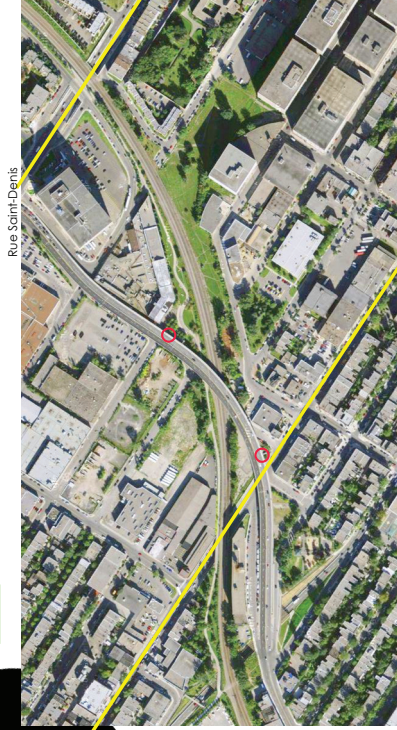
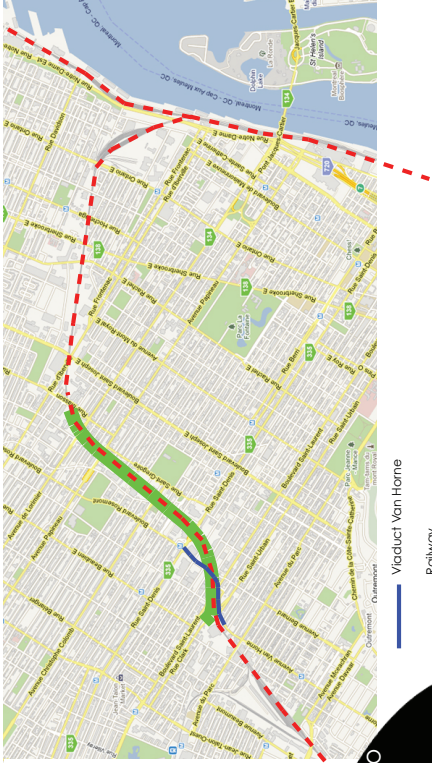
Informal passageways





### CONTEXT

### RAIL WAY AND BIKE PATH



pedestrians and cyclists are accustomed to cross the CP tracks by cutting along the fences to avoid the detour overpasses that provide links north and south. The viaduct is poorly suited for cyclists and pedestrians and are particularly feared the dark.

**Happening participatif  
Collaborative action**  
Pour l'ouverture d'un passage autorisé sur la voie  
For a legal crossing on the track

**OUVERT/OUPEN**  
13.06.2010 3-6 pm  
Bitte cyclable le long de la track du Mile End.  
Please cycle along the track along the  
Mile End track, corner Du Geopé.

Passages dans la track du Mile End /  
Ways to cross the Mile End train track



**Police HIDE to catch the trespassers  
and give them fines  
\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$**





The numerous bikers and joggers that use the bike path rarely use the viaduct to cross the railway.



The fast circulation on the viaduct is not inviting.



A narrow sidewalk borders the viaduct. It is rare to see bicycles employ it.

## Bicycle Network



— Viaduct Van Horne

- - - Railway

█ Bike Path



The “green network” project proposed by the City of Montreal in 1986 has only been partially completed. The idea was to create a new urban infrastructure devoted to leisure activities such as walking, cycling, cross-country skiing and running races.

This ecological transportation network links the neighborhoods, with the specific goal of revitalizing underused or disaffected spaces such as railway tracks or hydro corridors. (Alriq 2001, 27)

The green network was never completed, but it begins at the edge of La Petite-Patrie, close to Fullum, just in front of Masson, and ends in a fishtail beside the Home Depot, completely dying out on Beaubien to the west of Clark.

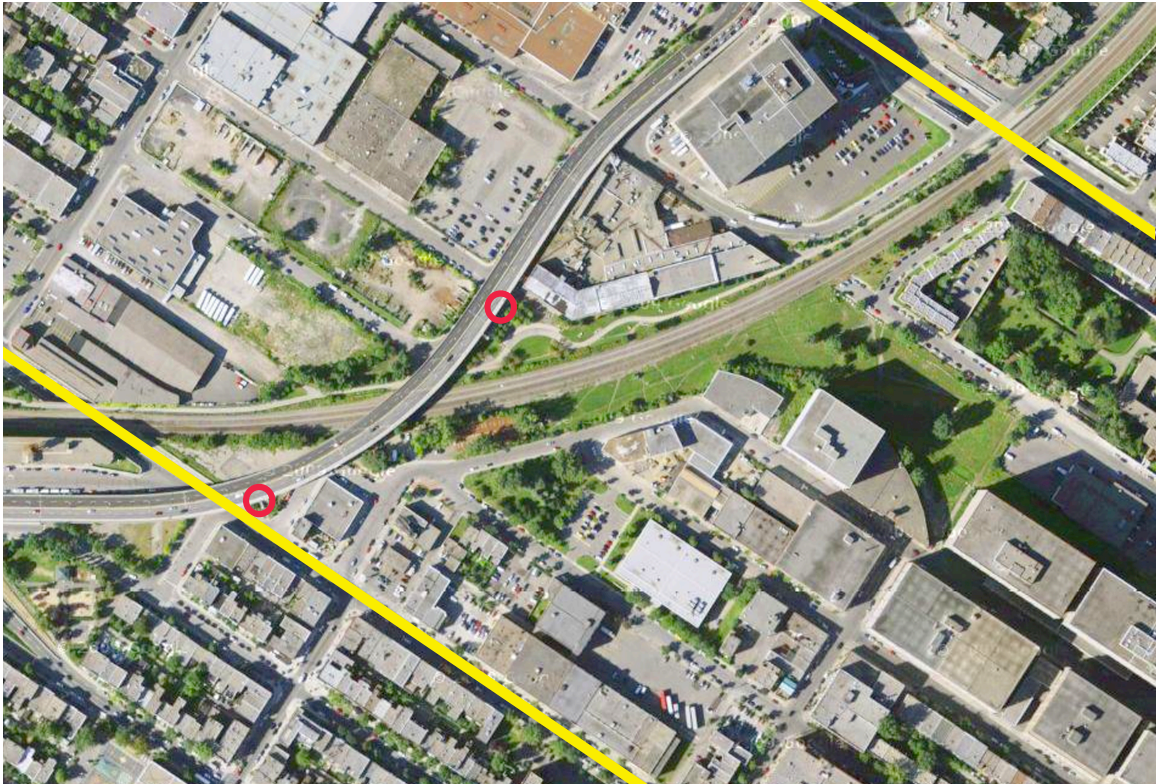




The steep stairs that link the viaduct to the bike path are not bike friendly and are rarely used by pedestrians.



Rue Saint-Denis



Boulevard Saint-Laurent

Viaduct Stairs 

Photo: Google Maps



# Built-up Area

artist loft living space beside hardware store

graffiti on abandoned building

artists studio carpenter studio antique dealer

no path for pedestrians at the end of the viaduct

Saint-Lawrence Warehouse

outlaw entrance to go under the viaduct. link the two districts

Parc Sans Nom under viaduct

artist loft living space beside hardware store

Parc Sans Nom under viaduct

no mans-land at Saint-Dominique

people walk even if forbidden sign

Casgrin dead end under viaduct

Art lofts

metro Rosemont

Champ des Possibles

artistic de Gaspé sector

savaged path around viaduct end of the Bike path

little houses beside the railway industrial zone

DANGER DANGER

no mans-land at Saint-Dominique

people walk even if forbidden sign

Casgrin dead end under viaduct

Art lofts

metro Rosemont

Champ des Possibles

artistic de Gaspé sector





The residential fabric of this neighborhood was pulled out of shape due to industrial activity. Certain companies that left vacant areas between their sites of activity undermined the urban character of the site from the very beginning. The area was urbanized at the turn of the 20th century, and some buildings have great architectural value, or are remarkably symbolic of a bygone industrial era. An example of this is the Saint-Lawrence Warehousing Company (1924), which water tower has become a landmark in the city.



## Railway

The Canadian Pacific Railway is the southern limit of the Plateau Mont-Royal and the northern limit of Rosemont-La-Petite-Patrie. However, there is continuity in the urban background, both in terms of the residential population and its economic activities.

The ensemble forms a coherent and functional system, a sort of organism with the railway serving as a central spine. (Alriq 2001, 58)

When the area was developed, the railway provided a structure to the industrial plan: it was not the barrier that it has become today. Its ramifications penetrated deeply into the fabric of urban life, and it was the centre of urban development, as a link to the port of Montreal. Apartments on the north and south sides of the railway are similar in appearance. The railway served as a catalyst for urbanization and was an integral part of the urban landscape.

The businesses that developed in the north and south were dependent on the railway. Today, the façades of some buildings facing the railway have been walled over and now turn their backs to the tracks. The artists who have appropriated the district use the still existing openings on the side of the tracks, and have made them into their “courtyard entrances”. Glen Lemesurier, for example, is an artist who has a studio-gallery facing the rail. He often leaves the doors open so people can stop, admire his art, and converse with him.

Physical spaces are a major component to the creative commons that reflects civil society’s values. They are the material artifacts of democratic projects, providing a vehicle for citizens to communicate about their worlds and share their visions. (Mitchell 2003, 85)



Artist studio facing the rail.



Glen Lemesurier studio facing the rail.



## Vacant Lots

What makes a space public ... is not its preordained "publicness". Rather, it is when a given group appropriates a space and through its actions makes it public in order to fulfill a pressing need. (Bell and Wakeford 2008, 85)



Graffiti mural under the viaduct  
View of the Saint-Lawrence Warehousing Company.

This concept is already clearly evident in the site: people have taken vacant lots and appropriated them. These spaces are used daily all year around. During the summer, the community uses them for running, walking dogs, reading, making movies, relaxing, meditating, making art, eating, etc. In winter, they ski, make ice rings, play in the snow, sculpt, etc.

Above all, these parks are gathering places that have thus far been very successful. The special features of these wild parks must not be changed; we must leave them as they are. As M. Foucault said:

“Revealing the event there, where it seems to be unregulated.” (Bouchier, 52)

In a space used on the fringes, the possibilities of discovery are even greater than in a space where the program has been pre-ordained. That these spaces are still wild allows us to make surprising discoveries. If the character of a space changes, the species will also change in consequence.



Sculptures of Glen Lemesurier whose scope has extended all along the railway but particularly in his oasis baptised «Parc du crépuscule».







## Traces of Life

People use the vacant lands that border the tracks as informal courtyards for gathering, barbecuing, etc. Additionally, there are two major parks in the site: Le Parc Sans Nom (the park without a name) and Le Champ des Possibles (the field of possibilities) and many vacant lots under the viaduct.

Le Champ des Possibles is an old sorting yard dismantled and converted into a green space. This green space, beside the gigantic buildings of De Gaspé, is protected by the patrimonial status of the Carmelite property to the other side, is now the habitat of many different animal and plant species.

Plants in this area include over 93 species from 34 families, including the rare *Cynoglosse officinale*; a species new to Quebec, *Verbena bracteata*; 19 species of trees, and the highest concentration of black walnut trees in Quebec. Animals include 18 bird species, 11 butterflies, several other insects, invertebrates, and mammals.



Champ Des Possibles bording De Gaspé buildings  
Photo Luc Levesque & Marie-Suzanne Désilets

Informal spaces like Le Champ Des Possibles are important for many reasons: they offer a sensual and aesthetic experience that cannot be had in designed and controlled spaces; allow for a multitude of improvised activities; and encourage community engagement and interaction by letting the people who use the space determine how it should be used.

If the Champ Des Possibles is designated a park or community garden, it would be subject to all of the rules and restrictions that govern those kinds of places, which would destroy everything that currently make it so attractive. (Christopher DeWolf)

## Parc Sans Nom



The Parc Sans Nom is a small vacant land that was used by Dare Dare, “A multidisciplinary arts centre of Montréal”, that transformed the empty lot to a free creative space.

The Parc Sans Nom is a unique, creative and unstructured space that was fashioned from a neglected and long-abandoned lot. Since Dare-Dare moved there in 2006, dozens of artistic and community events have been staged in the park and it has become a popular place for people from the neighborhood to gather. (DeWolf, 2008)



In 2007, Chih-Chien Wang built a “nest” of cardboard boxes, underneath the Van Horne Viaduct.  
Copyright © Chih-Chien Wang



August 16, 2008, Bridge Burner Party  
Under the Van Horne Viaduct  
Photo by Krysta-lee Karenina

In the empty space under the viaduct, spontaneous DJ Dance parties are organized, watched but tolerated by the police. It is also a prized site for graffiti artists and for art installations.



## Art Practices

The strong presence of artists on the site is the source of cultural vitality of the location. The site is the land of graffiti, murals are everywhere, which brings vibrant messages and color on the walls of abandoned buildings and on the grey structure of the viaduct. The surrounding of the rail is a paradise for these graffiti artists, who are often pushed out of the city toward industrial zones. The trouble is that it is a dangerous art, speeding trains are not that loud and often nocturne artists are surprised by its presence.

Many accidents occur near the train zone, yet the problem is never solved, only moved. Last year three young men were hit by a train, two of them died.

According to Raymond Viger, Chief Executive of Café-Graffiti, the accident illustrates the problem that caused the reduced amount of legal graffiti walls. Repression moves the problem somewhere else. (Anabelle Nicoud, La Presse, 2010)

CONTEXT

REPRESSION OF THE GRAFFITI ARTISTS

The garment district is far from being a no man's land: thousands of people live and work there, in textile factories, small businesses, design studios and artists' workshops.

For the artists who work in the area, displacement is a constant worry. "This is a great opportunity to recognize that this is a district with artistic potential!" "We want to stay here."

© Canada, Heritage and Preservation, Politics by Christopher DeWitt July 4th, 2008

31 october 2010 three young graffiti artist have been hit by a train.

The hunting in the city center of graffiti artist, made them move near bridges and highways.

"Repression, moves the problem somewhere else."

Raymond Viger, Chief Executive Officer and artist of Café-Graffiti

The creation of legal walls to prevent and sensibilise towards graffiti.

The citizens were invited to attend the performances of the artists at the viaduct Van Horne.

CONTEXT

UNDERGROUND POPULATION MAKES THE SITE EXCEPTIONALLY DYNAMIC AND INTERESTING

## Social Demographics

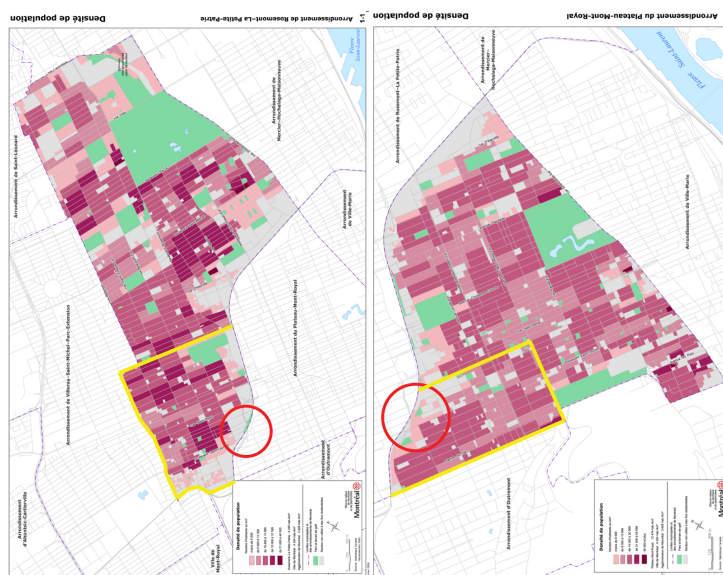
Saint-Laurent Boulevard has traditionally been a privileged sector in terms of immigration from Mediterranean countries (Greece and Portugal), Eastern Europe (Poland), Jewish diasporas and more recently, from Asian countries. Also, the Francophone character of the neighborhood has never been as strong as it is today.

### POPULATION

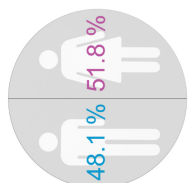
### GROUP OF AGES

### DENSITY

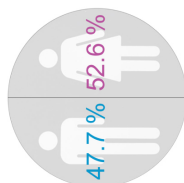
The population of the Saint-Édouard district is 34 585 which represent 26 % of the total of Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie.



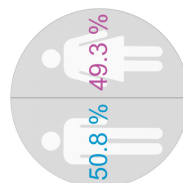
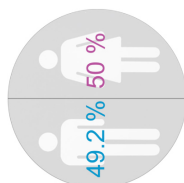
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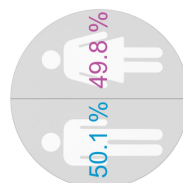
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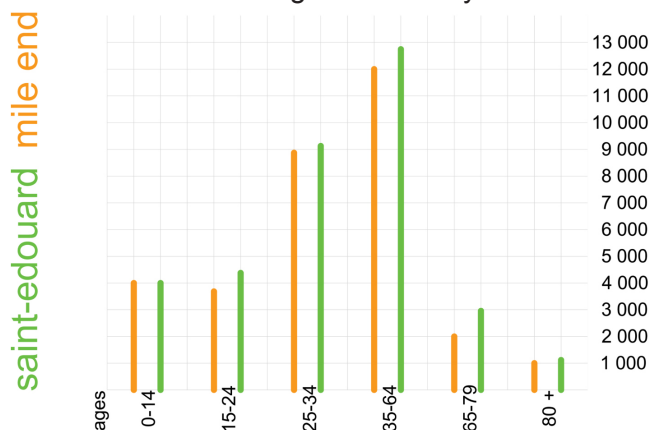
Saint-Édouard  
34 585



Plateau  
101 054



Mile-End  
32 000



The population is 32 000 in the Mile-End district which is 32% of the borough of Plateau Mont-Royal.







## Social Demographics, Housing and Gentrification

Most of the population in these two districts have modest incomes, no access to grant programs, and cannot afford to buy property. Tenants cannot easily access property in the area due to current market conditions. Closer to the industrial zone, the low rate of home ownership and a high tenant turnover means that housing units endure a lot of damage and deterioration.

- Housing units in the Mile-End district are divided into 29% owned and 71% rental, which is 5 points less than the average of owned property in Montreal.
- Housing units in the Saint-Édouard district are divided into 22% owned and 78% rented, which is 13 points less than the average of owned property in Montreal.

The value of the rental units is decreasing, but the cost of rental is rising due to the gentrification and property taxes.

Gentrification is already underway—artists and bohemians are here and that’s the first sign of it. It’s not necessarily a bad thing. When a neighborhood gentrifies, it also diversifies. It’s only when it becomes perverted, like on Mount Royal, where you can’t get a sandwich for less than \$15, that it’s a problem” says Mathieu Beauséjour, coordinator for the Centre d’art et de diffusion Clark, a non-profit artists’ organization on de Gaspé.

For the artists who work in the area, displacement is a constant worry. Many found themselves in Mile End after being evicted from downtown lofts. “This is a great opportunity to recognize that this is a district with artistic potential,” says Beauséjour. “We want to stay here. ( DeWolf, 2008)

## CHAPTER 2: DESIGN APPROACH

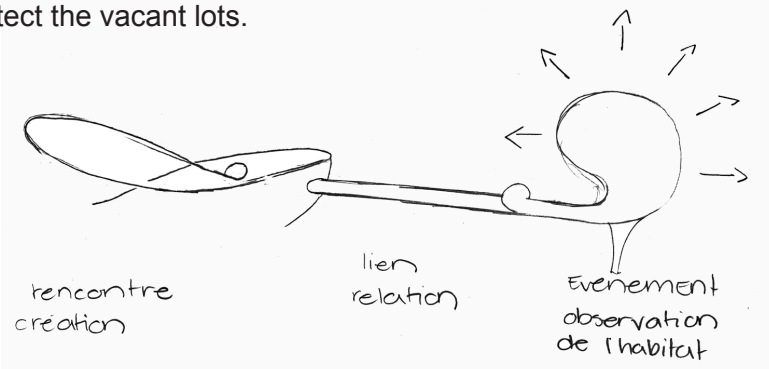
### Observations and Goals

#### Observations:

Citizens are avoiding the overpass and using the railway as a path to connect north and south. However, this is an unsafe passageway, and police fine pedestrians who trespass on the railway.

Graffiti art is a popular activity in the area, especially at the edge of the railway, but too often accidents occur.

The site has special features that attract an “underground” population and makes the surroundings exceptionally vibrant and interesting. Unfortunately the vacant lands that the community uses are in constant danger of being exploited by the town for future development. The Parc Sans Nom was converted as a storage space in 2008. To protest, Dare Dare wanted to camp with the citizens of the neighborhood in the hope that the park would retain an artistic vocation even after it had left. Others are planting sculptures in the goal to protect informal spaces from future development. Overall, the neighborhood his very committed to protect the vacant lots.



#### Design goals: an Architecture of Resistance

1. Create a passage that connects the two districts and provides surface for graffiti artists to paint on legally and safely.
2. Create opportunities for interaction between passers-by and artists.
3. Open-up the artistic community to the eyes of the public to create awareness.

## Design Approach

The idea is to preserve the “wild” habitat and observe the species that inhabit it. The decision to keep the vacant lots intact has consequently influenced the architectural approach.



Champ Des Possibles 2010  
Photo: Emily Rose-Michaud

There is no architecture without a concept – an overarching idea, a diagram, or party that provides coherence and identity to a building. Concept, not form, is what distinguishes architecture from a mere building. However there is also no architecture without context (except in utopian conditions).

Concept and context are inseparable. Frequently, they also conflict.

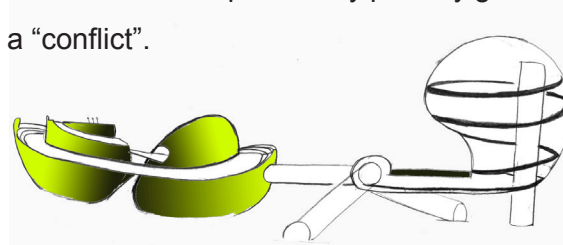
Tabula rasa VS genius loci...

Exploration of the space between concept and context

1. Indifference: when an idea and its setting coexist but do not interact
2. Reciprocity: close interactions between architectural concepts and their context in a complementary fashion
3. Conflict: the architectural concept is strategically created to clash with the context, and both protagonists may need to negotiate their respective survival. (Tschumi, 1994, 11)

I propose an architectural object that will respond to the idea to not interfere with the context; to keep the surroundings as wild as they are: a “reciprocity”.

Nevertheless, I suggest a form that will clash with its context. I propose circular forms, the exterior convexity and globular forms, which will create non-precious leftover spaces, that will not be claimed plazas, in the intent to pursue my primary goal of keeping the surrounding as wild as possible: a “conflict”.



The green spaces that border the railway are important for the neighborhood residents. They are spaces that allow gathering, barbecuing, and many other free cost activities that the populations of both neighborhoods enjoy. Those “parks” are already valued spaces in the urban fabric, I want to keep them as they are and even favor their future development.



## Program-Project

I propose a passage, named the “Ramp”, that will border a node of artist studios named the “Caracol” (snail). This pathway is intended to be a social space that will stimulate connection between passer-by and artists. It will bridge both sides of the railway and create opportunities for graffiti artists to express their art on the architectural object safely without repression. The footbridge will link the studios to a “Blob” that will serve as an observatory to the wildness of the surroundings. The skin of the Blob will be a diffusion surface where it will be possible to witness artists’ activity projected on the exterior.

1. The Ramp creates a passage that gives legal surface for the graffiti artists to paint on. This path is not a direct crossing system, it is a bike friendly slope that encircles the studios.
2. The Caracol links artists studios with the ramp, providing an opportunity for interaction between passers-by and artists in creation, and places for gathering.
3. The Blob opens-up the artistic community to the eyes of the public. It contains ramps that bridge both sectors for a direct crossing.

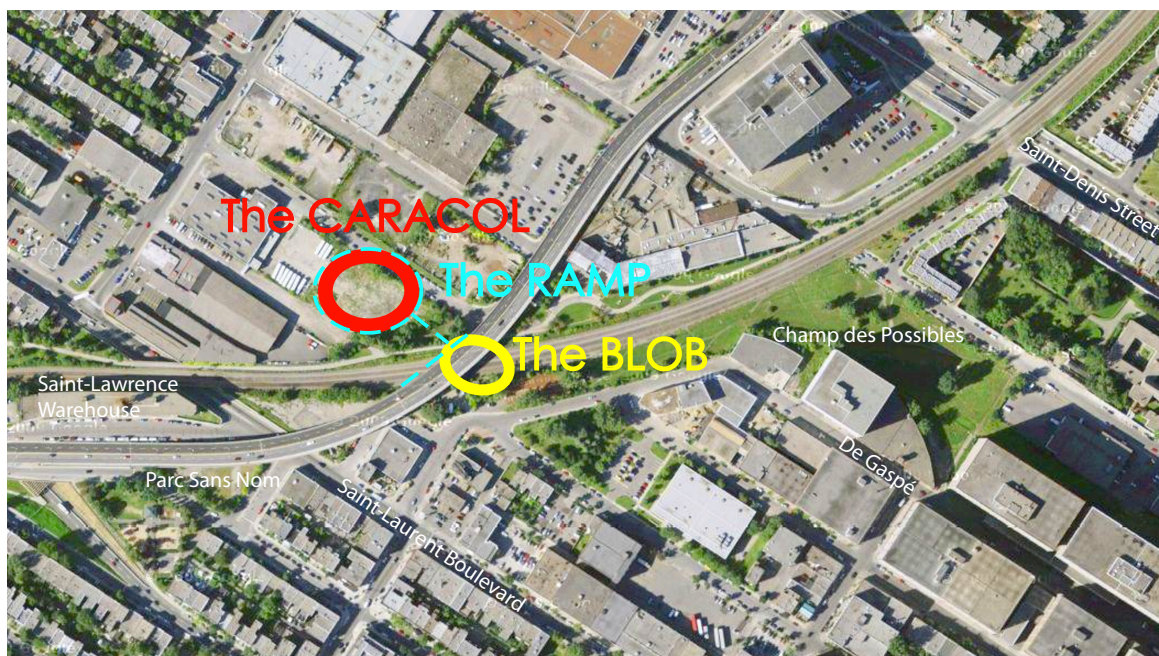


Photo: Google Maps



## Project Site

The placement of the works of art in the city is fundamental: they allow the reactivation of abandoned spaces, and provide a symbolic and monumental dimension to the community, which sees itself reflected in them. (Bouchier, 52)

The architectural object is not only a podium for the artist, but also an artistic object in itself. This is an opportunity to assure an identity to this space that has been denied by the rest of the city. The Blob, set up in the centre of the site will act as an “urban landmark”.



Site of the Caracol



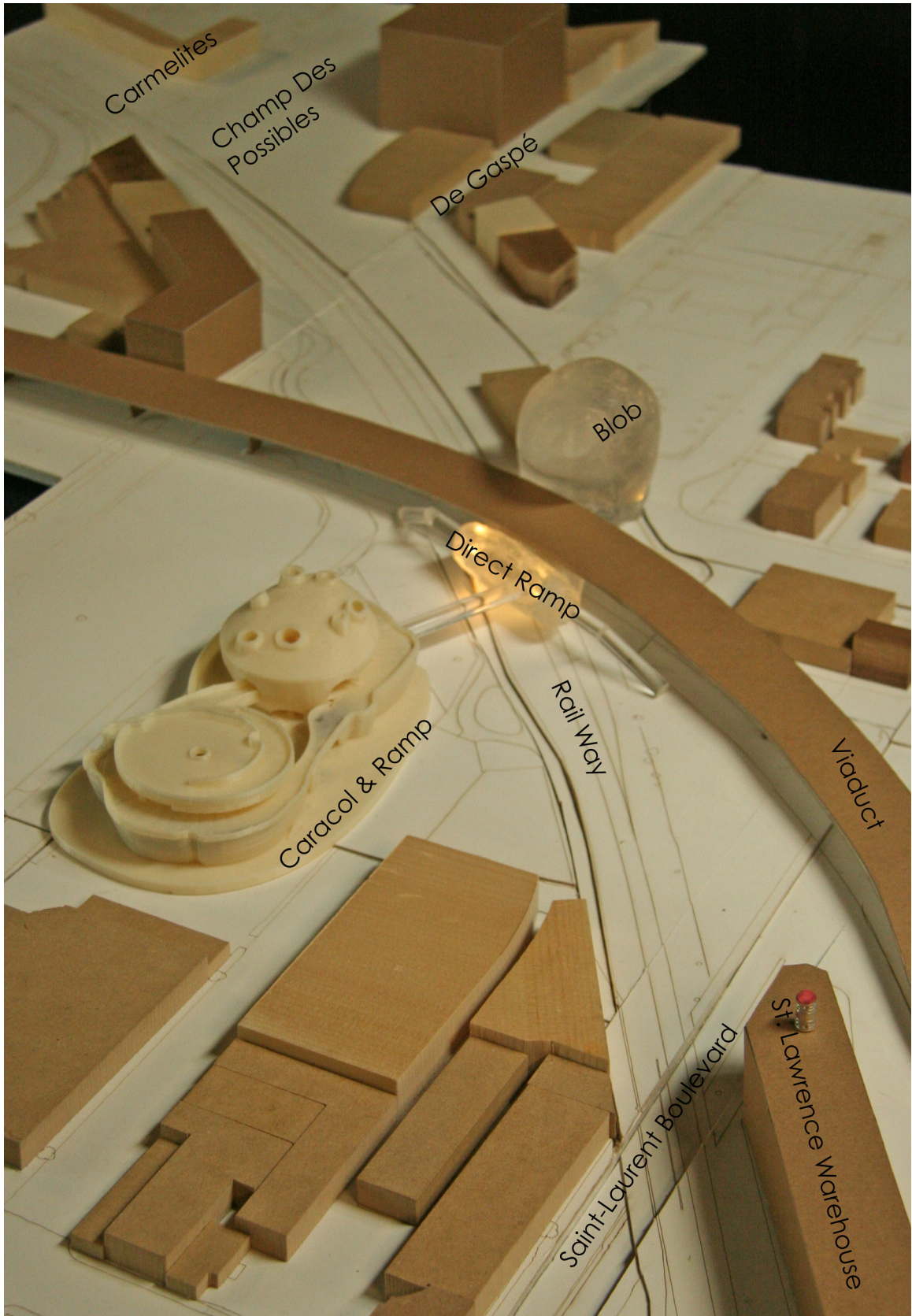
The direct cross way ramp will border the viaduct.



Site of the Blob

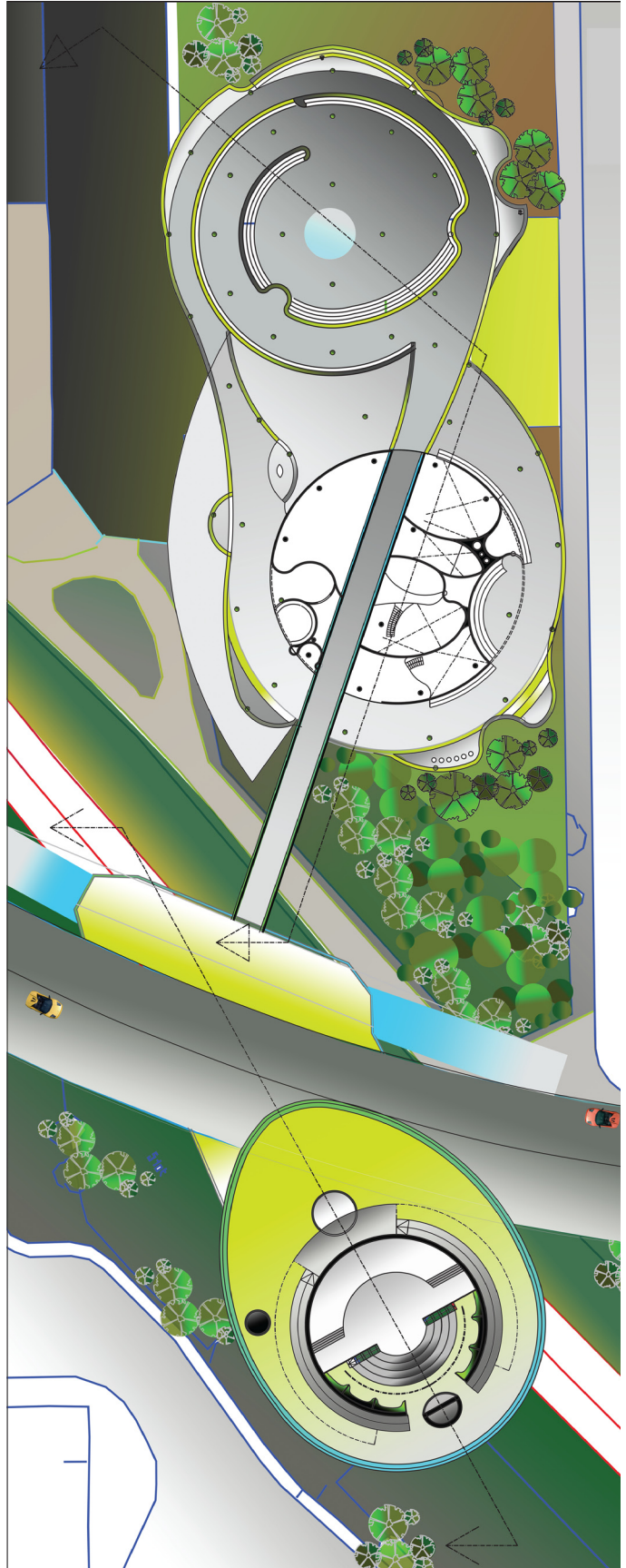


### CHAPTER 3: DESIGN PROPOSAL





# Section and Plan



## The Caracol



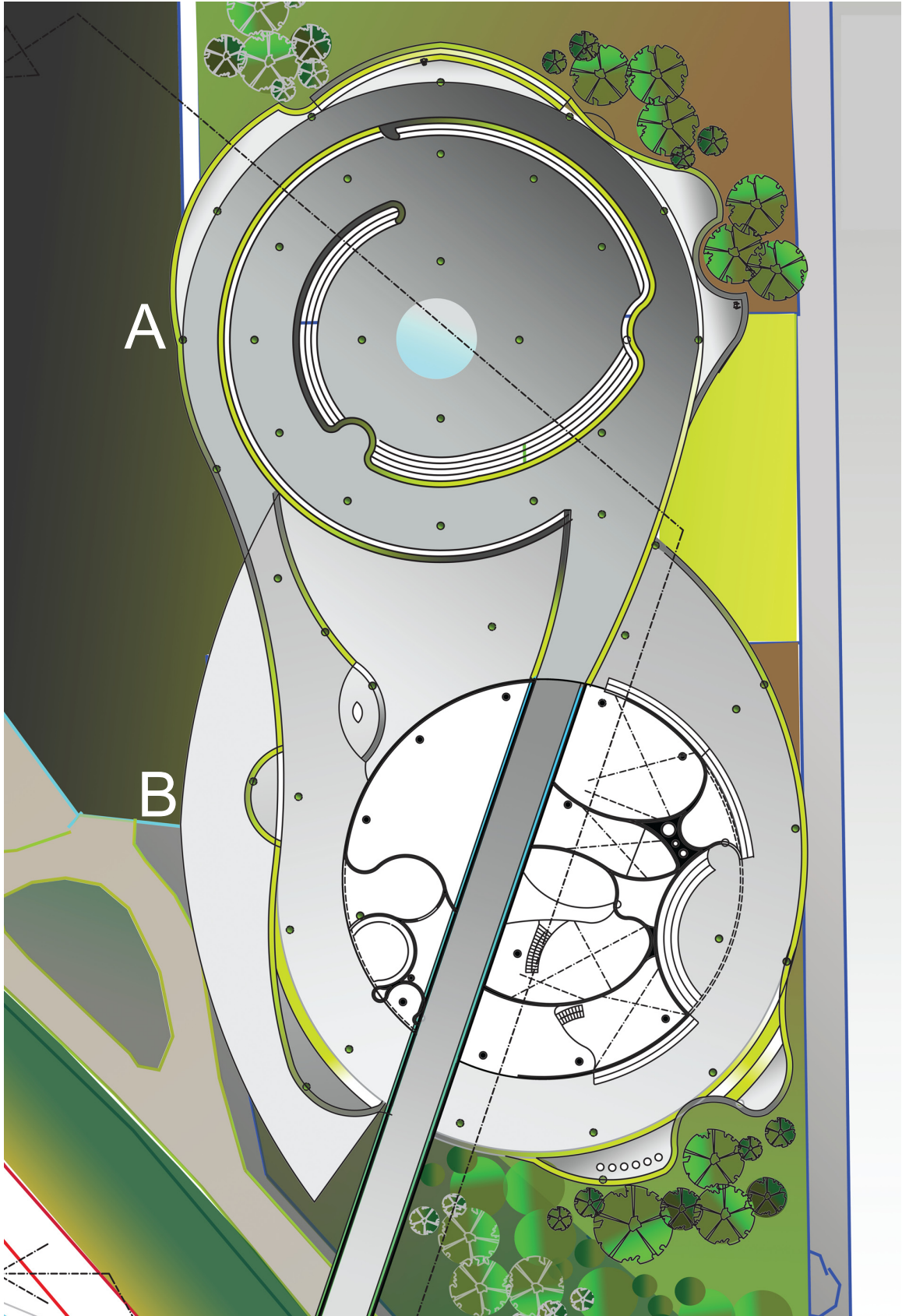
As with the yearly event “Nuit Blanche” (an artistic event held at night), the project seeks to make art accessible to everyone through a developed series of stages by the artistic community.

The Caracol would support artists in residence taking part in the social experiment proposed by the architectural project. These are places of spontaneous creation, where a rotation of artists in residence renews, revitalizes, and continually recreates a different context of occupation.

The Caracol is formed by studios bordered by a ramp. The journey offered through the architectural object is justified by the will to offer passers-by a show, where the observer is offered an opportunity to view artists in the process of creation. This sight is normally off-limits to the public, but here it will be offered to the eyes of the visitor, as a form of voyeurism bringing together a public and a universe that is only rarely accessible. Fashion designers, photographers, models, filming of music videos or films, sculpting, jewellery-making, music studios, audio-visual artists and more: an entire artistic universe will open up to the eyes of passers-by.

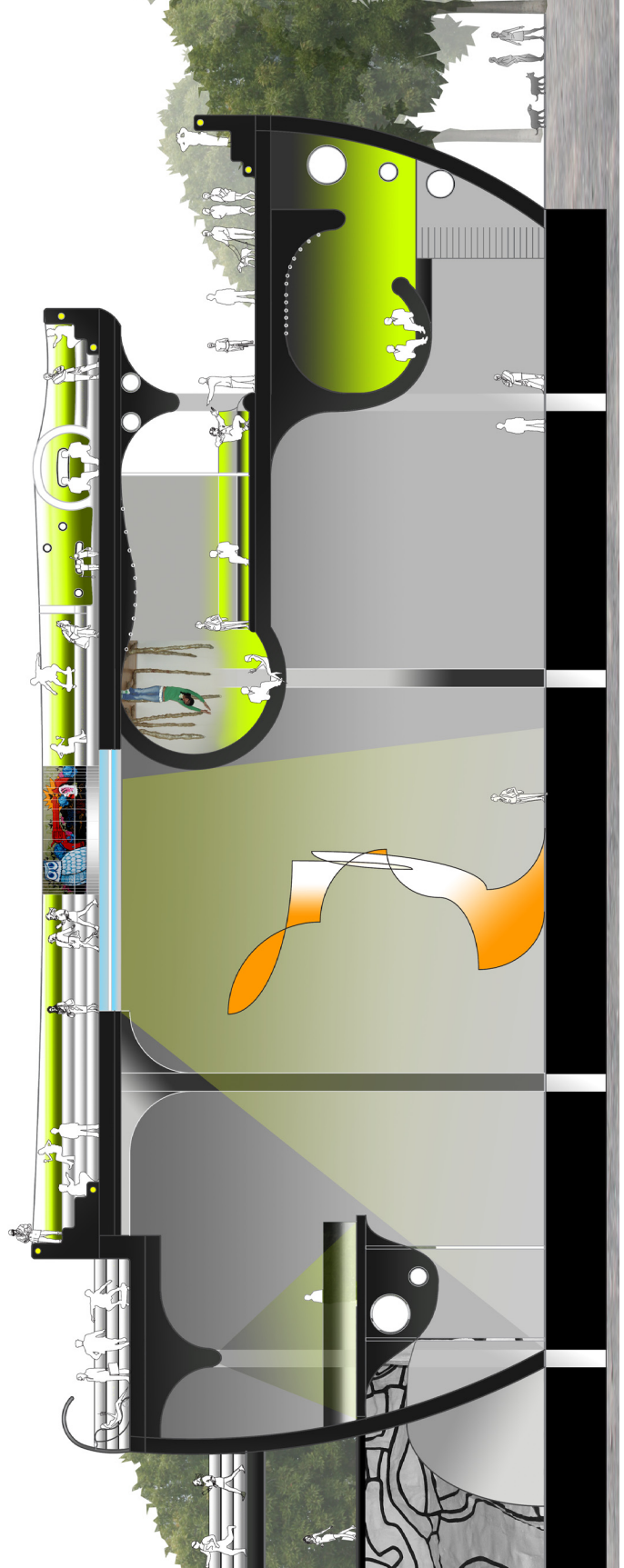
The studios are of various size, some are small creation areas, some are informal spaces to meet, others are more spacious to be used for large creation when required (ex: for very large sculptures or for video or movie set). The Caracol is where all the artistic work takes place: it is the motor, the vital organ, and the centre of creation.

# Caracol PLan

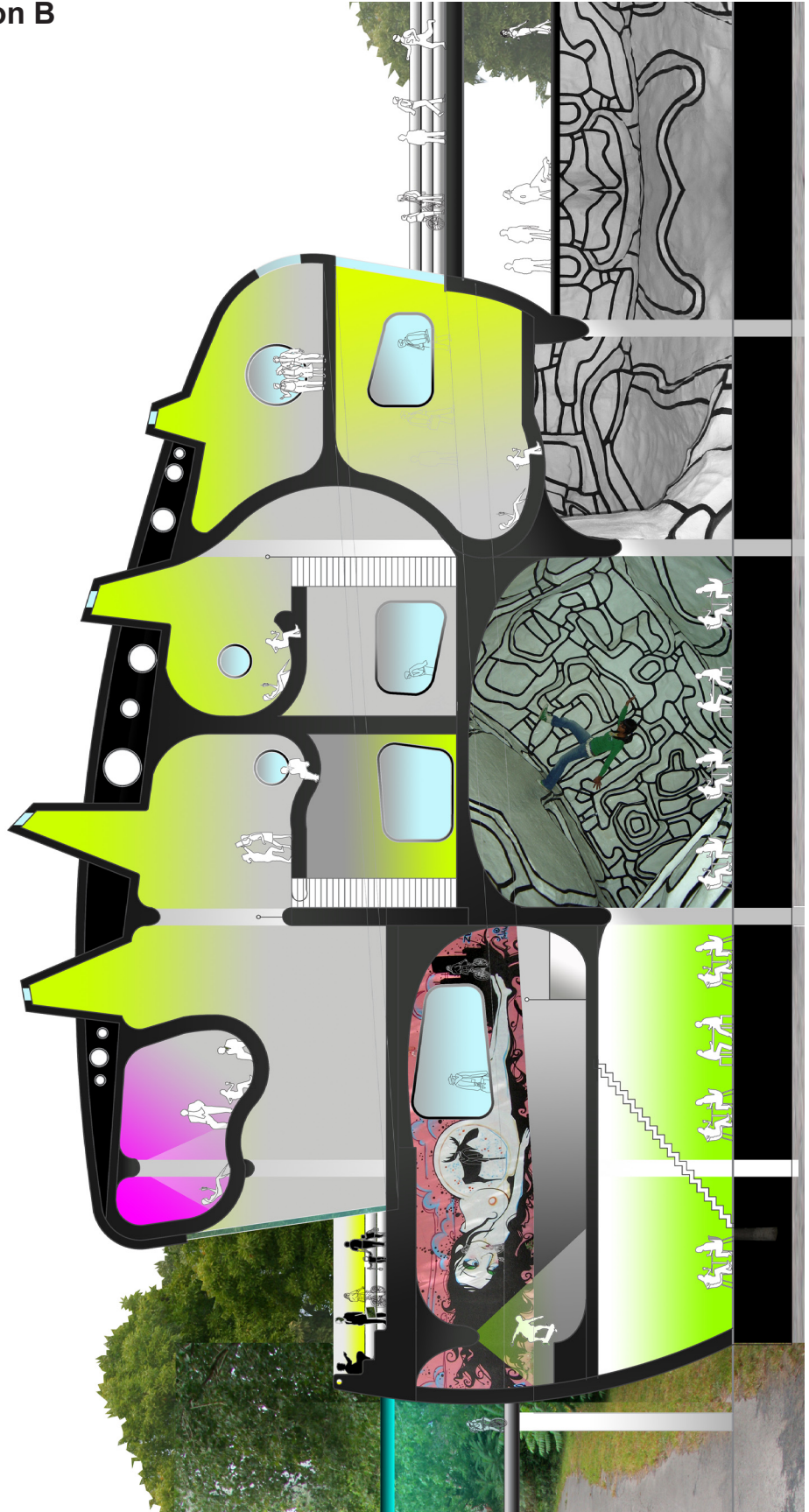




# Caracol Section A



# Caracol Section B



## The Ramp

Generate density, exploit proximity, provoke tension, maximize friction, organize intermediate space, promote overlaps, sponsor identities and simulate confusion. (Puglisi 1999, 12)

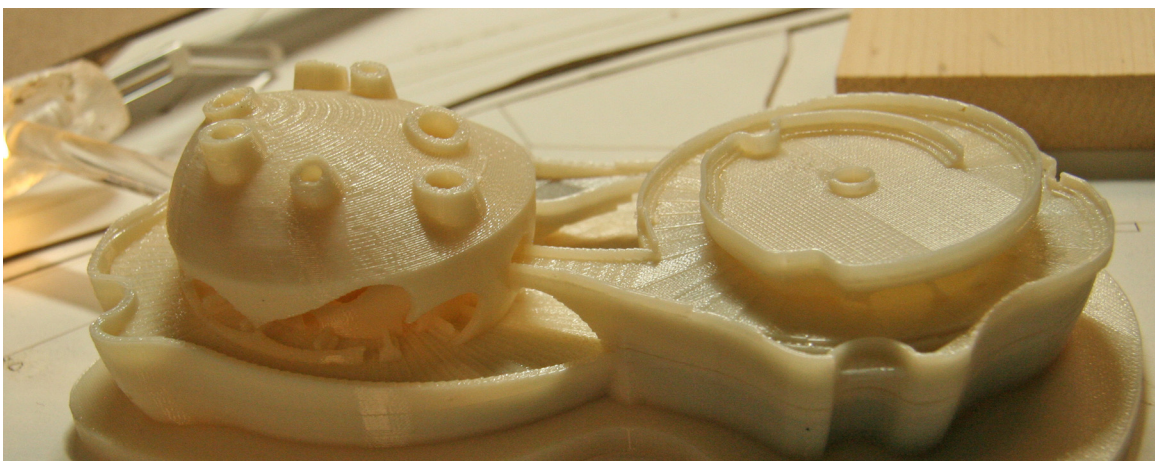
The trajectory offers many spaces for gathering, sitting, observe, but also it offers an experience to pedestrians with spatial strategies throughout the circulation path.

As the districts are ethnically diverse and populated by people of different socioeconomic status, the site will allow for people from different communities and social classes to enter in contact and interact casually. The goal of the encounter between passers-by and artists goes beyond the “unusual” aspect of it, to promote a dialogue and moreover, a better understanding of the practice of different art forms. For example, the journey enables the traveler to witness the progression of a sculpture. Or see a music video in the process of being created and filmed.

Not only is the finished work made public, but the process of work itself becomes the primary focus of the outing. This is an innovative artistic approach, a social experiment that will allow to witness events of all kinds.

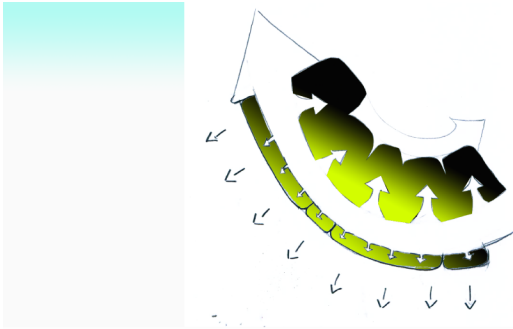
The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, not by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution, but by the pleasurable activity of the journey itself. (Dewey 1934, 5)

The tunnel linking the blob to the Caracol is a link between space of creation and the space of transmission. It is a ramp that circulates information, creativity and passenger. It is also a distribution space that brings pedestrians to the ramps that cross the railway tracks.



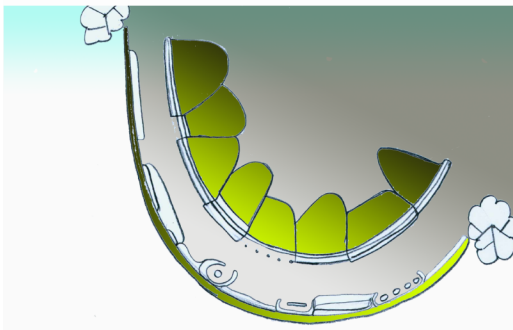


## WALKING & BICYCLE & SKATE ZONE



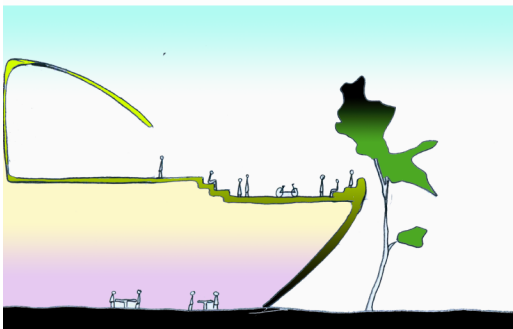
A walking ramp is placed towards the end of the open space: the passenger can enjoy the closeness and the intensity of the studios. And at the other side a special view of the site.

The ramp allows places for walking, for staying, and occasions to play.



Niches and irregular facades:  
Become attractive and popular places where to sit, stand and protect from weather.

Create an unforgettable and total expression: a characteristic visual expression that will give a feeling and a sense of place that will inspire the people.



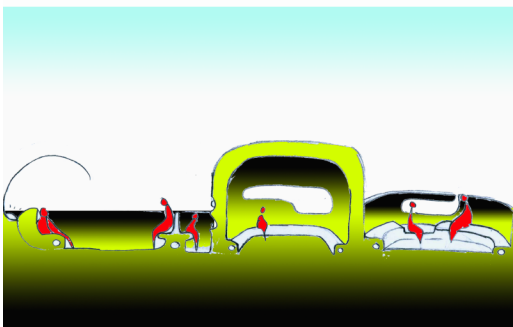
Promoting contact:

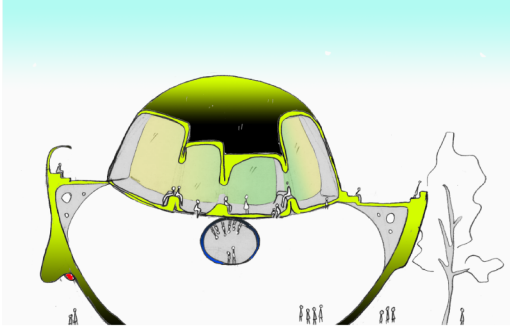
- No walls
- Short distances
- Face to face orientation
- Visual
- Auditory

At the edge of the ramp, the view is unobstructed but their back is protected. Sitting places for all size of people  
Light to indicate the rise of levels (stairs, benches, floors) and to illuminate the ramp.

In small spaces within the ramp, there is some globules that offers intimacy and security from weather. They form micro-climate within the ramp.

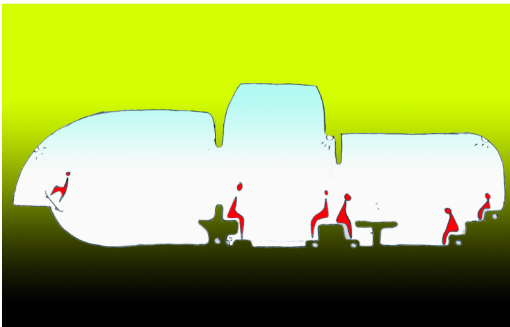
The entire object is for sitting.





Narrow units and many doors to concentrate encounters at the entrances.

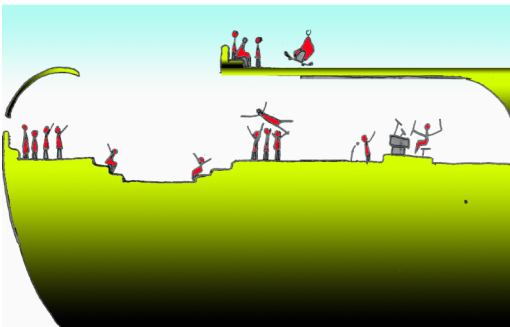
Gradual transitions between public and private spaces to encourage people to participate in the life and events of the building.



An invitation: somewhere to go, something to do.

Facilities are provided to bring activities directly in front of the studios.

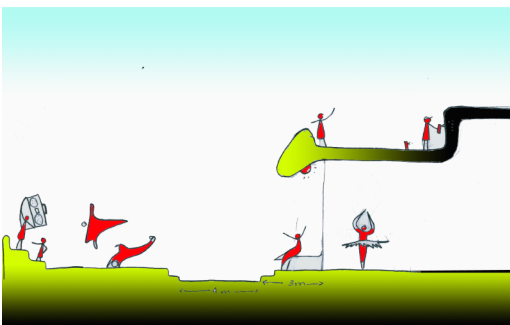
Lights to see the people, lights and sings. Better lighting NOT brighter.



Small dimensions for warm intimate spaces

To open up the studios: glass walls and "front yards"

If there are many people on the ramp and in front of the studios there will be mutual protection, reducing the potential crime.



The ramp is there to give an experience, a feeling, being part of the people.

Hear the artist making a sculpture, people play, and talk.

Graffiti painters and break dancing are cultural highlights.

## The Blob



The core of this project is the Blob, a glass ball that serves as an observatory and an entity that can transmit videos on its shell. It contains a spiral-shaped ramp that allows visitors to observe the exterior site (like in a safari, you can look at the wild) and to be part of the ceremonial gathering of artist and community, such as fashion shows, exhibitions, conferences, concerts etc.

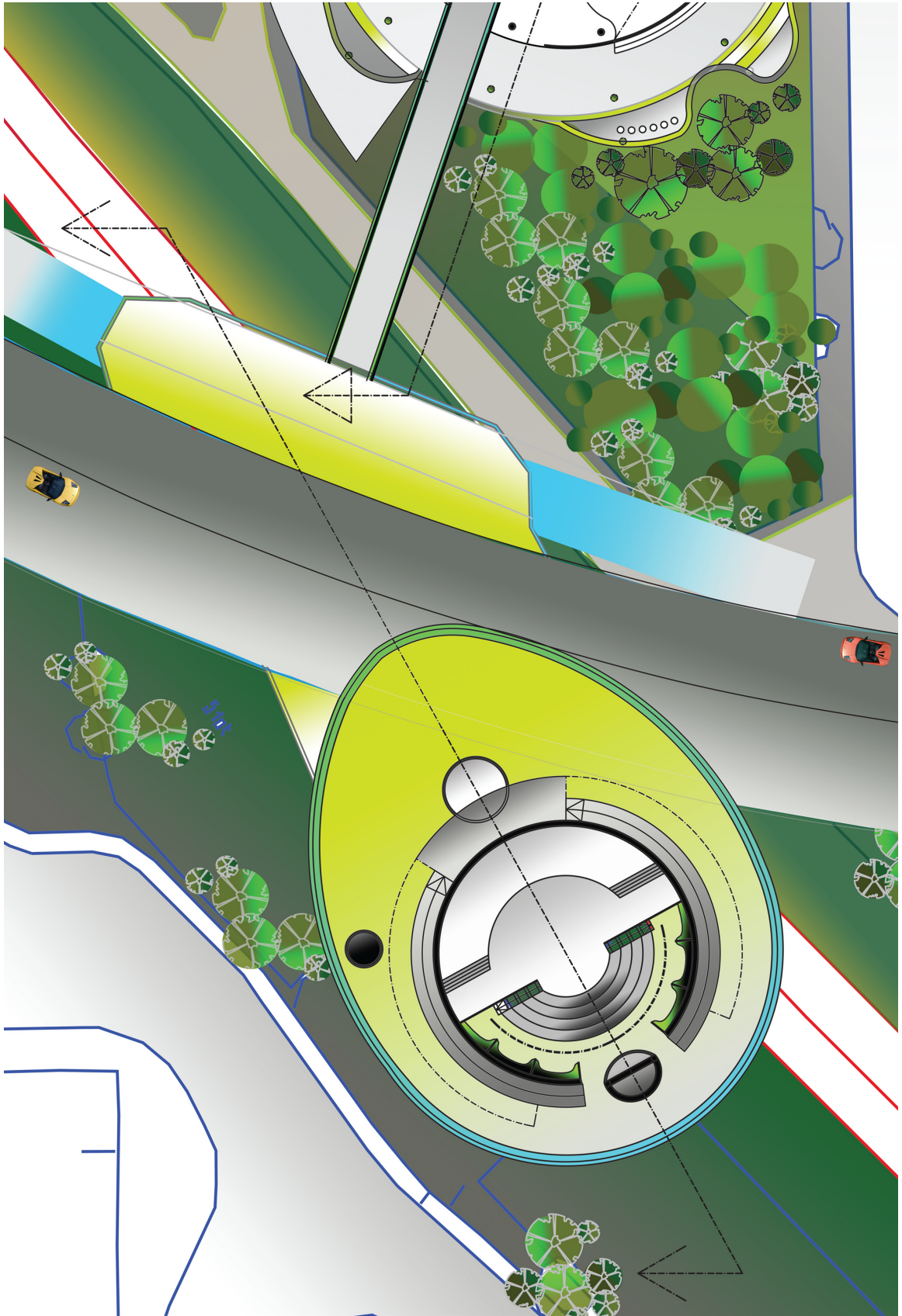
The Blob acts as a communicative object. There is no barrier to communication, no frontier of information. The object opens up the artistic community to everyone. It is the heart of the project, like the nucleus of an atom that supports the reaction to the artist's creation in the Caracol.

At night, the Blob displays video images on its skin. These videos are "live", showing the artist creating, as in a rock concert. Transmission informs and entertains people who are around the railway doing various activities. Not only artistic affiliated videos will be shown, but also popular events such as the NHL hockey playoffs in winter and World Cup soccer in summer will encourage people to gather and watch the show while they eat their picnic lunch.

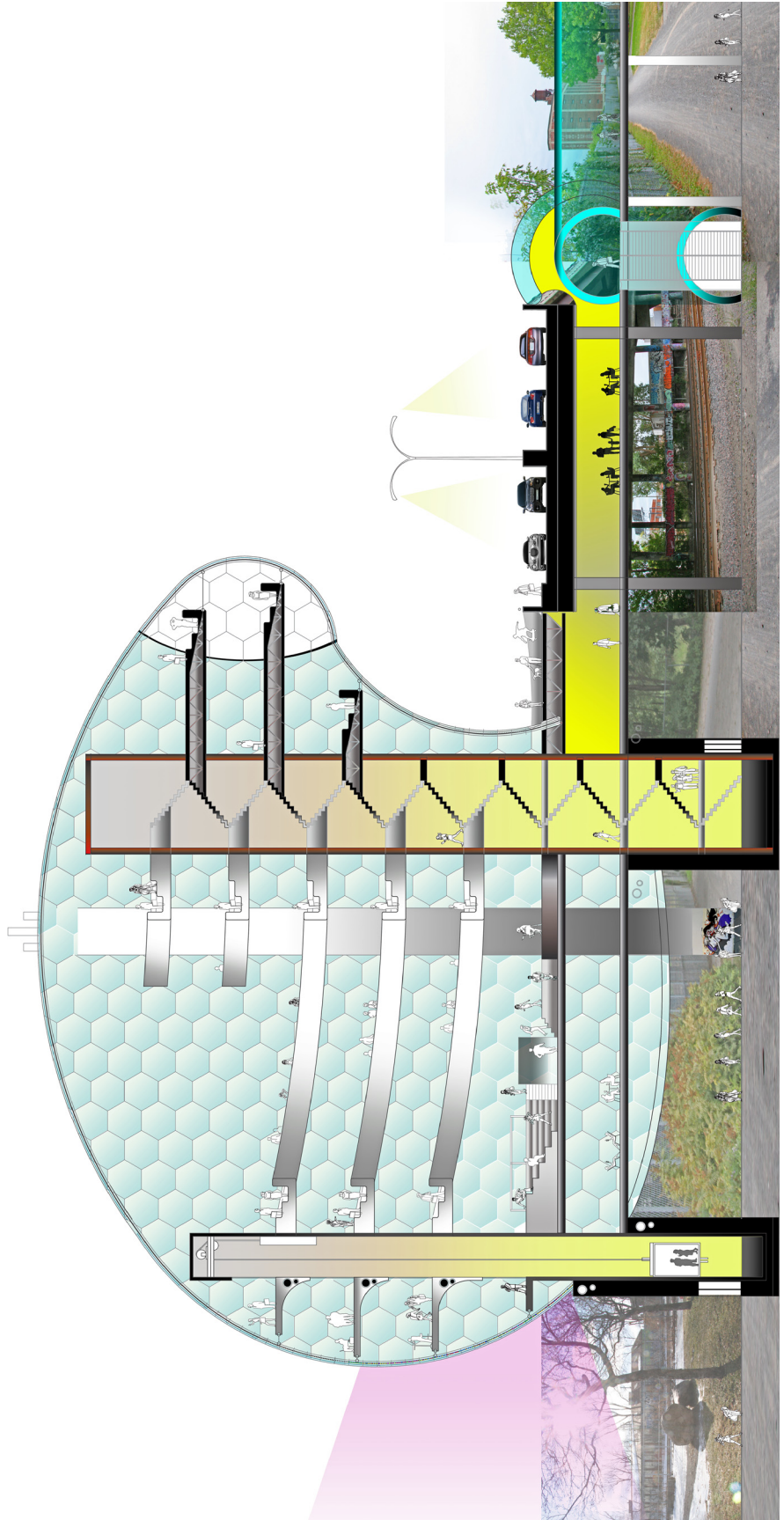
The Blob is in constant interaction with the site, and unlike normal office towers, the blob stays alive all the time through its expressive façade. Besides, as the landscapes that surrounds it is majorly low, the blob becomes a landmark, a light house for the passer-by. Just like the Olympic Stadium or the Orange Julep, its round-shaped form clashes with the context. It will be reconisable from a plain and become a focal point in the landscape.



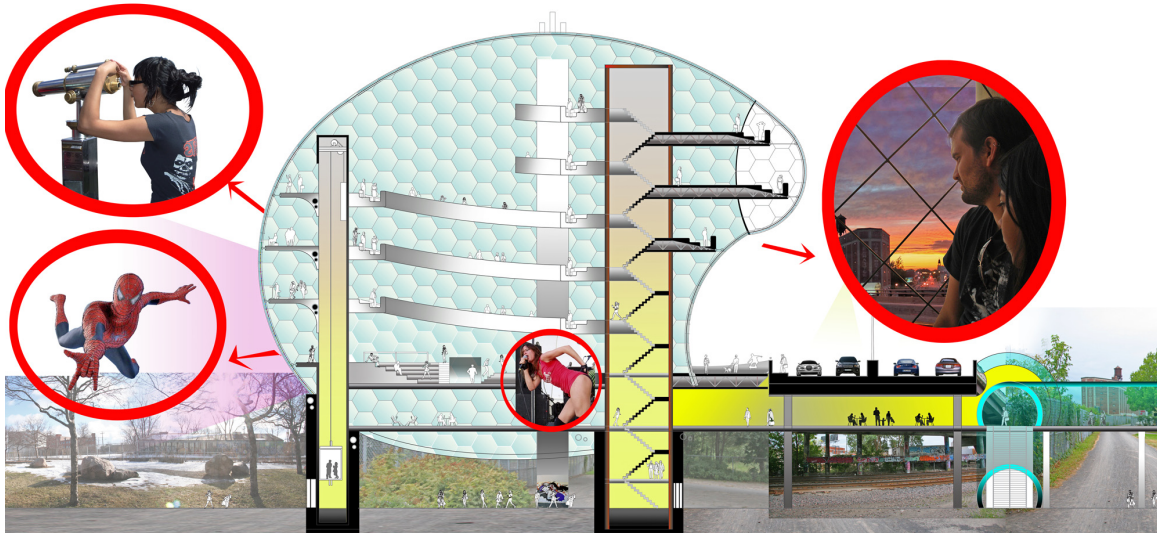
# Blob Plan



# Blob Section



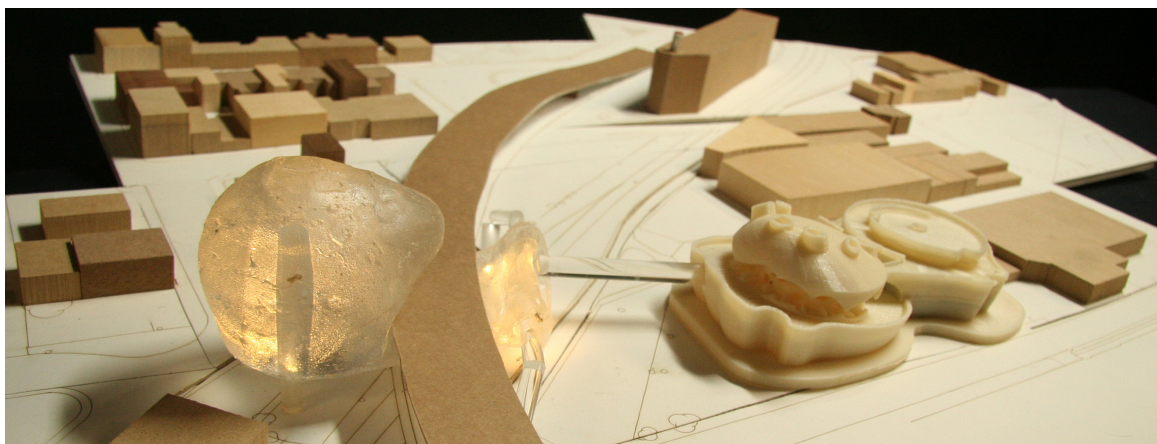




Ubisoft could be the tenant, giving an economic energy to the project, and feeding a constant activity in the blob.

Just like the Beenox launch of Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions, in Quebec City, the Blob would project “gamers” playing live on its skin. The blob proposes that kind of event, except in a regular basis, when other events, such as a fashion show or art exhibition, are not happening in the blob, the quotidian everyday life would be the mix of those “gamers” and the artist of the community. A not so unusual mix, as Ubisoft employees and all kind of artist populate the site. It would be the hub of the result creation coming from the Caracol and from the creative work of the video gamers.

Faced with exceptional circumstances, a building sometimes acquires an exceptional status.  
(Klein & Monin, 7)





## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

This thesis supports Aldo Rossi's argument that the history of a city is central to its identity and character. Specifically, it proposes that former industrial zones should not be transformed into "restored" residential condominiums. If that were to happen, in a not so distant future, it would be impossible to remember that The Mile-End and Saint-Édouard districts once played a major role in the development of Montreal. These places would lose their spirit and identity.

Highway and railway infrastructures are highly problematic in North America. New strategies to revitalize those spaces, like the High Line in New York City and Freeway Park in Seattle, are examples of transit infrastructures converted into urban parklands. As I was designing my architectural proposal, I went through many challenges: whether I should make a master plan on the site, or to avoid making any major changes to it. My question then became: How can architecture stimulate encounters between an underground population and the general public without deteriorating the special character of the site?

I had to step back from the master plan.

I propose architecture of resistance, because I stand firmly against future developments. The rounded silhouette of my architecture is the result of my goal to preserve the parkland that already exists and works. By not altering the surroundings, I maintain the artistic community in the sector. A few years ago, the police tried to regulate the Tam Tam – a musical event held weekly on Parc Mont-Royal – and as a response, the event moved elsewhere to avoid policing. I want to avoid this kind of migration.

Architecture of resistance is a form of opposition that residents of the sector already execute in their own way. Graffiti artists leave their traces on the walls, sculptors claim vacant land with found materials and people form committees to protect their surroundings. My proposal supports resistance to future development in the site and I am pleased to take part in that movement.

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