

Exploring The Underground City

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The inception of Montreal's underground displayed significant inventiveness in striving for a multi-level city, however today the urban network has developed into an overly-commercialized, perfunctory series of 'unfelt' commuting spaces. This thesis is firstly an invitation to see past the glossy storefronts and re-connect to the romantic notion of a subterranean urban labyrinth. Situated between the Expo islands and Mount Royal, the underground city needs an infusion of places of active engagement in order to exist in the city's social imaginary. This thesis also emphasizes the sense in which these dormant spaces can be awoken to provoke in its occupants a sense of their potential for play and encounter. Transgression puts this potential in motion.

The notion of transgression forwarded is personified by the 21st century 'urbanist', who studies and uses the city. As flâneur, drifter, urban explorer, *traceur*, tracker, the transgressive urbanist transforms familiarity by crossing thresholds. Beyond these thresholds lies new territory of sensual engagement and physicality, where we playfully search for the city's secrets, and engage our capacities to 'feel' space. By investigating these practices, a design direction emerges that offers relief from the persistence of 'anesthetic space' in Montreal's underground. This thesis presents reflections on the history of Montreal, a poetic exploration of 'urban ambiances', and a curation of works by transgressive urbanists.

Through a series of cartographic explorations charting the network's accidents and deviations, a series of zones are identified as potential intervention sites. Within these places are converging traces of subterranean tunnels, freeways and passages. The intention of these interventions is to unearth a latent urban ambiance of play.

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Dedication

To G.

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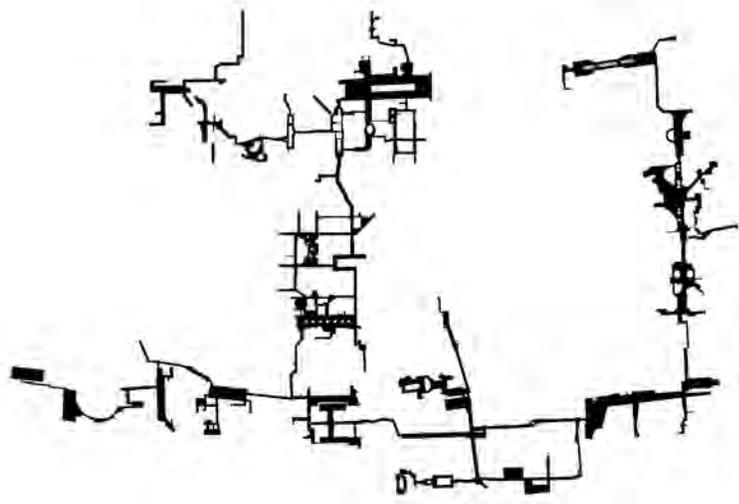
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**Exploring
The Underground City**



“We are bored in the city, we really have to strain to still discover mysteries on the sidewalk billboards, the latest state of humor and poetry.”¹

-Ivain Chtcheglov



1

Introduction: The Ambient City

“He incorporated Sherbrooke Street into his general domain. He believed he understood its elegant sadness better than anyone else in the city. [...] He watched people line up for buses, board, and zoom away. He always found that a mystery. He walked into lavatory-like new banks and wondered what everyone was doing there. He stared at pediments of carved grapevines. Gargoyles on the brown stone church. Intricate wooden balconies just east of Park. The rose window of another church spiked to prevent pigeons from roosting. All the iron, glass, rock. He had no plans for the future.”²

-Leonard Cohen

“Disposed in constellations that hierarchize and semantically order the surface of the city, operating chronological arrangements and historical justifications, these words (*Borrégo, Botzaris, Bouganville...*) slowly lose, like worn coins, the value engraved on them, but their ability to signify outlives its first definition. [...] A strange toponymy that is detached from actual places and flies high over the city like a foggy geography of meanings: held in suspension, directing the physical deambulations below.”³

-Michel de Certeau

Figure 1.1 (page 2)
The underground city.
A reverse Nolli plan
showing only the
circulation spaces of
Montreal's mega interior.

Ambiances

Walking through the city, the individual confronts various thresholds that, once passed, shape or shift a spatial *ambiance*. The urbanist perceives spaces in the city as having moods and emotions that exist outside him or herself. The reception of these moods plays a constitutional role in forming an *ambiance*: a place's 'felt character' that endows a room, or a street with an almost human presence (*urban anthropomorphosis*). *Ambiance* is a phenomenologically crucial component of the experience of space. The practice of 'feeling' *ambiance* is a reductive one, compressing, for example, the physical detail of a street—the time of day, weather,

Figure 1.2
A strange toponymy.
The foggy seduction
of *ambiance*.

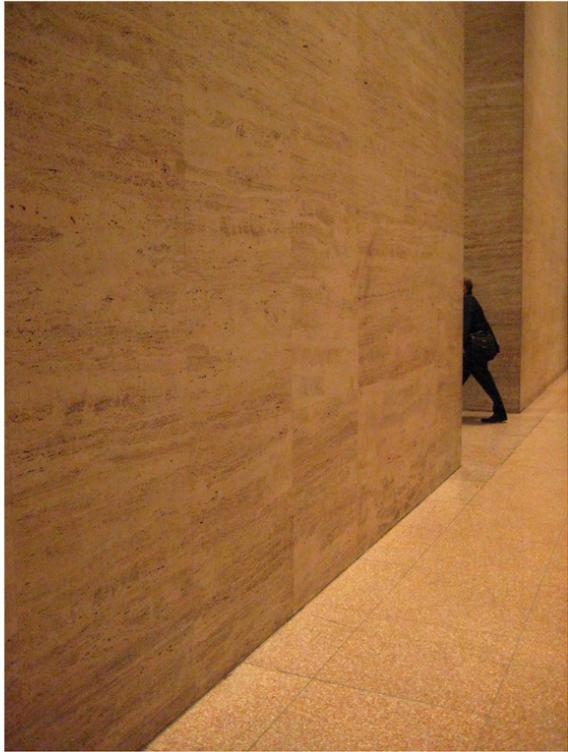


traffic, acoustics, etc.—into a single multiplex sensation. At the same time it is an expansive practice, unpacking spatial qualities at a given moment into a field of emotional complexity. Over time, perceived ambiances change tune, pulsate, fade, intensify, all according to the cacophonous and variable nature of the city, “like a foggy geography”⁴, a *psychogeography*. Woven within the experience of spaces with assigned meaning and function is a “strange toponymy that is detached from actual places”⁵, in constant flux by reassignments of meaning.

Despite the prescribed function of much urban space, the creative tuning of ambiance can begin to viscerally inform the manner in which space is used, producing or contributing to the instinctual function of spaces. The uncanny seduction of ambiance has the potential to transform the experience of architecture. In the moments in which space is occupied, emotions ferment and shape a “general domain,” an emotional mapping characterized by the experience of Breavman, Leonard Cohen’s drifter.

Drifting through Paris in the 1950s and 60s, the Situationist *dérive* (drift), was a practice that attempted to evaluate the character and intensity of different ambiances. Practiced as a means to promote a collective rethinking of the city, urbanist-activists wandered through the city in small groups, developed techniques, produced mappings, accounts and interpretations of their drifts. The practice was adamantly differentiated from the classical notion of the stroll, likening strollers to mindless automated tadpoles in a tank.⁶ The drifter is set apart from the typical recreational walker; he trusts that the desirable ambiances will yield spontaneous encounters, *situations* that enrich the quality of city living, collectively. Simultaneously, the individual drifter contributes to an ambiance, both accruing, and actually depositing experience into the memory and mood of a place. “Their very landscape is alive.”⁷ This urbanism risks taking on an all too mystical tone. A *situation construite* (constructed situation) was thought

Figure 1.3
Passage Jouffroy.
The Parisian arcades:
experiments in interior
urbanity.



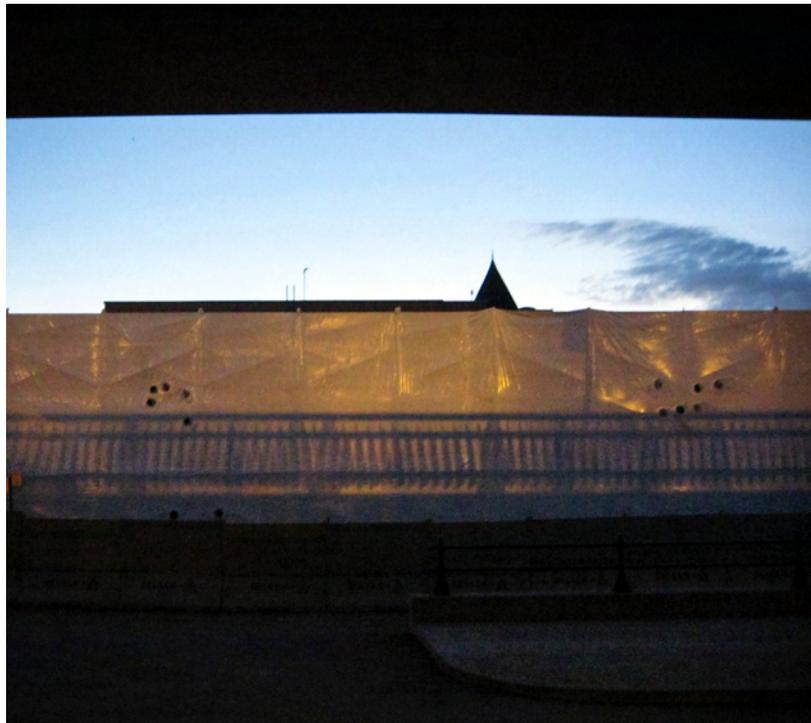
to be the result of a “formulary” that creates genuine situations on demand, leading to altered ambiances.⁸ Controlling the experience of spatial ambiance is an impossible burden, though Situationist attunement to the significance of ambiance is crucial.

The Flâneur

The drifter is a flâneur. It was customary for Situationists to perform drifts in groups, but the subjective aspects of psycho-geographic practices are arguably more effectively engaged in by the single individual. The drifter should practice alone, free of the pressures and influences that necessarily befall a group of drifters. Preceding the *dérive* is this other French notion of urban ambulation, *flânerie*. The flâneur is intensely attuned to ambiances. He observes the formation of the ambient city and participates in its transformation. Noctambulists, for instance, retrace the route of the flâneur who operates in and out of a dream-world, distracted by his desires. Before turning the corner, he imagines a given block, projecting his desires into an invitation from the city. His apparently classical stroll disguises an actual attraction to ambiances of pleasure, exoticism, and estrangement. In this way he is performing the role of the man of the crowd until the moment of transgression, a deviation that validates his stroll with the tadpoles, as a means to his *becoming*. Physical *and* social transgression lie at the core of the flâneur’s tactic. As a participant in the urban scenes that influence a mood, he is a creator of ambiance. The flâneur devotes himself to “that ancient dream of humanity, the labyrinth,”⁹ seeing the city as a game, setting the tone for his own creative spatial experience. He is a mythological urban figure, able to connect psychically to the ambient city.

Figure 1.4
Four moments at
Place Ville-Marie.
The perception of the
flâneur: a simultane-
ous convergence of
vanished times.

Everything potentially taking place in this one single room is perceived simultaneously. The space winks at the flâneur: What do you think may have gone on here?¹⁰



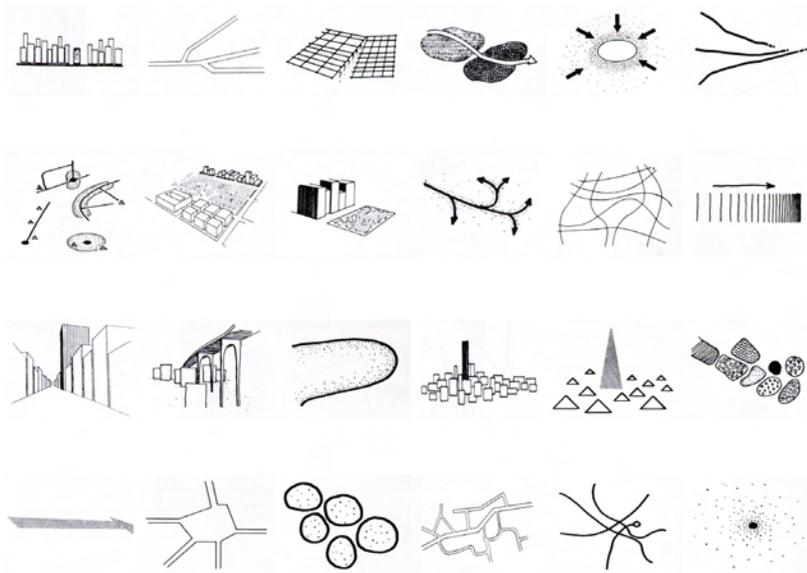
Walter Benjamin, a flâneur in the arcades of Paris, imagines the myth of a man who communicates with the genius loci, the “spirit of the place.” *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin’s fragmented collection of quotations, observations, and selections of poetry, constructs a history of Paris through the lens of the flâneur. The work is an unfinished collage of ‘rags’, gleaned over thirteen years before Benjamin fled the German occupation of France in 1940.¹¹ The reader becomes acquainted with Benjamin’s penchant for hoarding snippets of seemingly little value. Gradually apparent, however, is the emergent power of detritus in recreating the ambiances of the Parisian arcades. *The Arcades Project* is the result of the methodology of the rag-picker, a vagrant urban personage roaming dusk-lit metropolitan streets for scraps of the used or unwanted. Anthony Vidler, in discussing nomadic vagabondage, writes: “Evoking the urban flâneur, Benjamin extolled the art of ‘slow walking’ as the instrument of modern urban mapping”¹² The flâneur’s drift is a tool for mapping the experience of the arcades—its ambiances—in the juxtaposition of ‘culturally valuable’ material, with discarded minutiae. This creative act inverts conventions in assigning value to everyday trash, and from it, assembling an historical portrait of Paris. This resultant collage is comparable to what Carol Clark (in an introduction to her translation of Baudelaire’s poetry) calls “conjuring”. “Conjuring”, she writes, “in the strong sense, that of calling up visions or spirits.”¹³

Figure 1.5
Montreal at dusk 1.
Mapping the Plateau
neighbourhood with
photographs taken
at dusk.

Objectifying Ambiance

The flâneur’s mode of being is aligned with that of the drifter, and yet Situationist accounts and writing on the *dérive* struggle to reconcile the objective value of the intoxicated drifter’s apparent transportation into a vanished time, an affection to space that ought to have been recognized as valuable by architects. The production of hard data from Situationist experimental urbanism is understandably difficult. This is after all, a foggy and subjective ambient geography. Prescribed instructions resulted in a paradoxical mindset for the drifter: to both let go, and be aware, of one’s

Figure 1.6
Montreal at dusk 2



inclinations towards or away from certain ambiances. The practice demanded a balance of consciousness and unconsciousness, whereby a drifter would search for an ambient current, while also trying to purge as many associations with the place in order to see it 'purely'. The ambient city resists being grasped objectively. It is bound to shifting associations and allusions, subjective mental constructions. Guy Debord, on the ambiances of Paris, insists that, "the personal meaning they have for us is incommunicable."¹⁴ "The Naked City", [fig. 1.7] Asger Jorn and Debord's briefly up-to-date mapping of the most significant ambient pockets of Paris, became a well-known image associated with the Situationist movement. Its construction began as an investigation into new forms of cognitive mapping, a concept explored later by Kevin Lynch. Through an appreciation of child-like drawings that recall the most memorable aspects of urban places, Lynch procures insight into the way we organize and recognize visual memory associated with space. He calls this mnemonic construction an act of "imaging the city", and values cities that have the ability to impress widely varied images upon the memory of inhabitants.¹⁵ *The Image of the City* builds an inventory of architectural moments, derived from fragments of individual experience [fig. 1.8].

Figure 1.7
The Naked City.
Mapping Parisian
neighbourhoods
according to perceived
directions of ambient
currents.

The *actual* city, Cartesian space, designed and mapped to scale, is overlaid and infiltrated by the *ambient* city, (as well as countless other multipli-cities) forming what Michel Foucault has described as *heterotopologies*, a concept that also approaches the problem of objectively reconciling *places* with the individual's experience of space. Foucault, Lynch, Benjamin, as well as Henri Lefebvre, and Michel de Certeau, each place significant importance on socio-psychological and phenomenological approaches to understanding space.¹⁶ These practices, however, return us inevitably to the moment in which these events occur, when memory becomes impressed. Considered closely aligned with the (Situationist) *situation*, is Lefebvre's concept of *moments*, "which reveal the emancipatory capacity of potential situations."¹⁷ Situations, moments, instances that make up this foggy terrain of

Figure 1.8
Fragments of the city.
Mapping metropolises
with fragments of urban
experience.



latent potential, is the unknown city, the psychogeographic, heterotopic city where one may legitimately *dérive* through the back corridors of, say, Montreal's underground city. "Space should be experienced as much through the echoes of singing in the cathedral [...] as it is through any visual means of representation."¹⁸ This is the challenge for the modern urbanist.

Transgressive Urbanists

Figure 1.9
Paris Autumn.
A Parisian voyeur,
cloaked in shadow.

The term 'urbanist' is used in this thesis to describe not just the professionals who work in the field of urbanism, but also active urban explorers, city-dwellers turned ludic drifters who create new urban situations and encounters. With an introduction to the ambient city as premise, I will go on to identify mindsets associated with two urban personages: the privatized mentality of the daily commuter (in chapter 3), ritually anesthetizing and operating automatically in an implied set of rules; and the transgressive mentality of the explorative urbanist (in chapter 5), in search of thresholds into the unseen. The commuter is conditioned by daily routines, closed off, shut down, inhibited to the point of anesthesia. The latter mentality is experienced by the *flâneur*, explorer, trespasser, tracker, *traceur*, urbanists in search of invigoration, approaching the *erotic act* as described by Georges Bataille: entering the profane world through acts of violation, and violence.¹⁹ Fragments encountered in the city are pieces of evidence in the tracking of a murderer, or subtle signals that invite sexual engagement. Within the ambient city, the *flâneur* weaves in and out of the profane world, eavesdropping, trespassing and drifting. The *flâneur* crosses thresholds via the *erotic*, a term expanded by Bataille beyond its association to sexuality, beyond even a strict definition, towards more of an intention to "[assent] to life up to the point of death."²⁰

Figure 1.10
Parkour.
Urban residue
appropriated in
playful exploration.

Created 'situations' are moments of appropriation, essentially political acts that claim the authority to invent a new set of possibilities in a given place. Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*



or, “Man the Player” resonates with the experience of the transgressive urbanist. ‘Parkour’, for example, the art of movement practiced by *traceurs* and *traceuses*, treats the urban landscape as a playground for smooth, efficient negotiations between two points, tracing lines of movement using only the human body [fig. 1.10]. Often dangerous, this activity includes jumping from roofs onto lower balconies and scaling walls. The origins of modern skateboarding displayed a similar ingenuity, seeing urban landscapes as an expanse of potential ‘play space’. Searching for different acoustic conditions, and interested in unsolicited musical performance, I arranged several spontaneous drumming performances in Montreal, London, Toronto, and Cambridge [fig. 1.11]. Sigur Rós’ performances throughout Iceland celebrated a similar playful appropriation of the built environment, contrasting and contradicting prescriptions of use.

Figure 1.11
Public drumming.
top right: Accompanying the DVP. *bottom right:* Bouncing rhythms off the river wall.

The desire to transgress can result in discomfort or stress, where simple playfulness is elusive. One may find a masochistic pleasure in this submission of will, recalling the sexual taste of Severin von Kusiemski in *Venus in Furs*. Situationist Ivain Chtchevlov’s infamous three-month drift through Paris’ surroundings was an intense revolution of everyday life, a rejection of typical social roles, harvesting masochistic pleasure from a form of nomadic existence. Here, pleasure is derived from the combination of sensuality and a rebellious undermining of authority, a convergence of experience that constitutes ‘eroticism’.

Figure 1.12
Sigur Rós in an abandoned underground structure.
A moment during the band’s free tour of Iceland.

Among the convergence of physical sensations and the counter-authoritative mentality of transgression, an ambiance crystallizes. This maelstrom is reconciled in the psyche of the individual, forming a ‘felt place’. This unseen geography, as investigated by the drifter and the flâneur, has the capacity to re-invigorate an overly commercialized core such as Montreal’s underground. In each moment and in each person, a shifting gradient between the transgressive and privatized mentalities intermingle and come to the foreground in urban collective spaces, such as

streets, public interiors or spaces of mass transit.

The following chapter reflects on Montreal's history, identifying urban zones rendered anesthetic, and later, contrasting these places with the sensuality and eroticism encountered through practices of transgressive exploration.

Endnotes

1. Andreotti (1996, 14)
2. Cohen (1963, 107)
3. De Certeau (1984, 104)
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*
6. Sadler (1998, 77)
7. Guy Debord quoting Karl Marx. Andreotti (1996, 23)
8. Sadler (1998, 105)
9. Benjamin (2002, 429)
10. *ibid.* (2002, 419)
11. *ibid.* (2002, Back Cover)
12. Vidler (2001, 73)
13. Baudelaire (2004, xxxi-xxxii)
14. Sadler (1998, 80)
15. Lynch (1960, 9)
16. Harvey (1990, 213)
17. Leach (1997, 80)
18. *ibid.*
19. Bataille (1962, 11)
20. *ibid.* (1962, 18)



2

Delirious Montreal

“Montreal was madly buying records of Leadbelly and the Weavers and rushing down to Gesu Hall in mink coats to hear Pete Seeger sing socialist songs.”¹

-Leonard Cohen

“Maxim of the flâneur: “In our standardized and uniform world, it is right here, deep below the surface, that we must go. Estrangement and surprise, the most thrilling exoticism, are all close by.” Daniel Halévy, *Pays Parisiens* (Paris <1932>), p. 153.”²

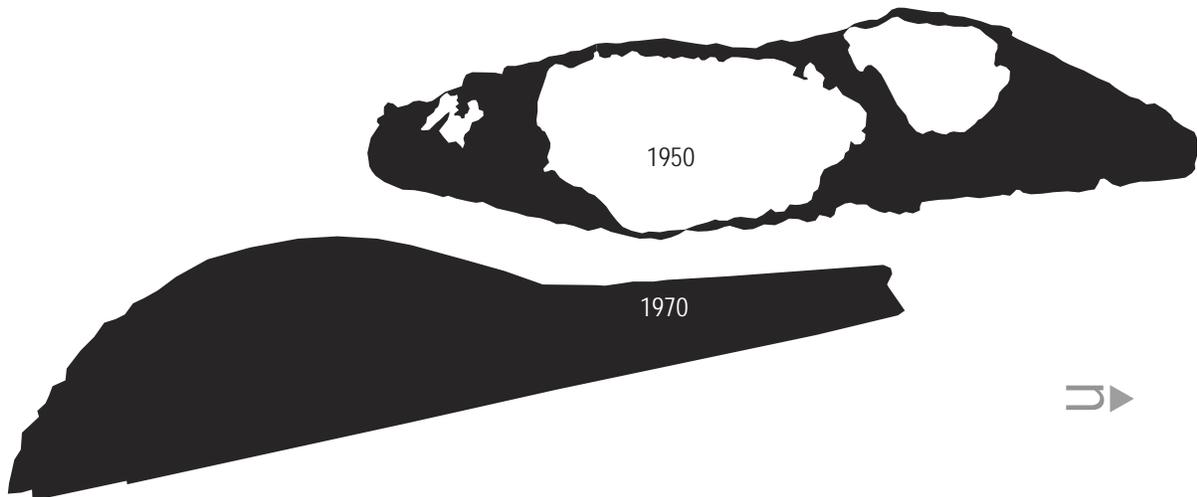
-Walter Benjamin

Le Paris d'Amérique?

Montreal's core has been selected as a case study over other similar interior networks such as Calgary's 'Plus 15', and Toronto's 'PATH', both due to its recognition as the largest interior complex in the world (stretching about 30 kilometers³), because of its roots in visionary urban planning of the 60s, and due to my own experience living in the city.

Montreal, wherein this thesis began, was the site of unprecedented urban transformation in the 1960s. Montreal's visionary urbanism produced pedestrian interiors of transit and consumption, an 'underground city', initiated in the decades of its cultural and economic rebirth. As a modest homage to Paris, the metro was fitted with rubber tires. This detail had a technical consequence: the tracks can't ever get wet, eliminating the possibility for the underground city to open up into the outdoors and add some natural light to the subway ride, like most other steel-wheeled subway trains. The tires also perform advantageously however, in that they reduce noise, and accommodate faster acceleration and deceleration. This technological import was thought by Jean-Louis Cohen, perhaps jokingly, to be the subconscious fulfillment of an urbanizing city's wish to be Paris.

Figure 2.1
Downtown Montreal.
The territory of the
Indoor city.



Being the *Paris d'Amérique* at this point meant bringing in the rubber-tire metro, because you couldn't bring in the boulevards. In terms of the process described by Freud in his *Interpretation of Dreams*, the desire [to be] another city is both displaced and condensed in this technology.⁴

One may also interpret the title of 'underground city' as a displaced desire to claim its own Catacombs and Arcades. But the origin of Ville-Marie as a French trading colony along the Saint Lawrence river holds little influence on the cultural identity of Québec, celebrated as entirely unique. Montreal's bilingual communities make up what has been called Canada's cultural capital.⁵

Figure 2.2
Beaugrand garage.
Urban reciprocation: the earth displaced from the metro construction used to enlarge the surrounding islands (*below*).

Expo '67 was an opportunity for a modernized Montreal to introduce itself to the world. The Expo was sited on Île Saint Hélène and Île Notre Dâme, artificially enlarged in the 1960s with the earth excavated during the construction of the metro system [fig. 2.3]. The construction of the metro system peppered the urban fabric with open lots, above which the City of Montreal sold to private developers. These new developments connected to the metro stations creating pedestrian shopping promenades in between, a model first seen in the foundations of Place Ville-Marie office tower.⁶ The network today is composed of 'public interiors', ubiquitous collective grey spaces. Here, the users of the underground are assailed by a series of polished surfaces, food courts and shops. These properties, though wildly popular, are interiorized, commercially-programmed and privately owned space, designed—often with little success—to render its surfaces 'urban'. Unlike the Parisian arcades however, which were originally commercial alleyways that eventually received atrium roofing,⁷ the underground colonization of pedestrian promenades had no existing urban character to maintain. These corridors consequently struggle to provide the conditions for meaningful urban encounters and situations.

Figure 2.3
Enlargement of the islands.



The Interior City

Typically, buildings are terrains of private ownership and demarcate, for the most part, the end of public space. And yet, so-called 'public interiors' are common zones in an urban environment. They take on shades of grey as a result of varying degrees of private control and differing codes of conduct that produce a non-imaginative mood, limiting a space's possible realities. Relative to a public street or park, many public interiors replace degrees of freedom (openness) and risk (friction, contact) with inhibition, standardized safety, security surveillance, and a numbing same-ness. The freedoms and risks of the exterior city reflect the diversity of choices that are relatively uninhibited compared to the tunnels of the underground city. Their promise, as quasi-public spaces, is to afford a retreat from icy wind, hot smog or the humdrum of the traffic above. However, the conditions that ensue constitute a pseudo-public space: publicly open buildings, driven by commercial retail or other singular functions.

Figure 2.4
Typical retail space.
Privately policed, air-conditioned interiors of consumption.

The interior city is populated by commuters, routine ambler, too often succumbing to creative retreat. This 'privatized mentality' of the commuter is used in this thesis to critique the underground city, and to identify the factors that have rendered the network anesthetic. A complacent ambiance currently persists in Montreal's privately owned city, resulting in a banal experience. However, the initial dream of the vibrant 'city' below the streets remains a beautiful ambition. A counterpart to the Cartesian monoliths towering the sky, is this place, a tentacular series of tunnels and corridors that connect seamlessly beneath the streets.

Les Dimanches Délicieux

Montreal is a charismatic city, cultured, surprising, and host to unique celebrations. Île Saint Hélène, once the host of Expo '67 is, on each Sunday in the summer, the site of 'Piknic Électronik', a weekly outdoor afternoon party attended by a motley group of recreational dancers [fig. 2.8]. The earth that once lay beneath Montreal's most populated neighbourhoods has been dug out

Figure 2.5
A connecting tunnel.
Relentless pedestrian plumbing.



and shipped to the water, artificially expanding Île Saint Hélène into an oasis along the Saint Lawrence River: Parc Jean-Drapeau. Here, Montrealers cap their weekend under the enormous steel Alexander Calder sculpture *L'Homme*, dancing to the sight of the sun setting behind Mount Royal and the downtown skyline.

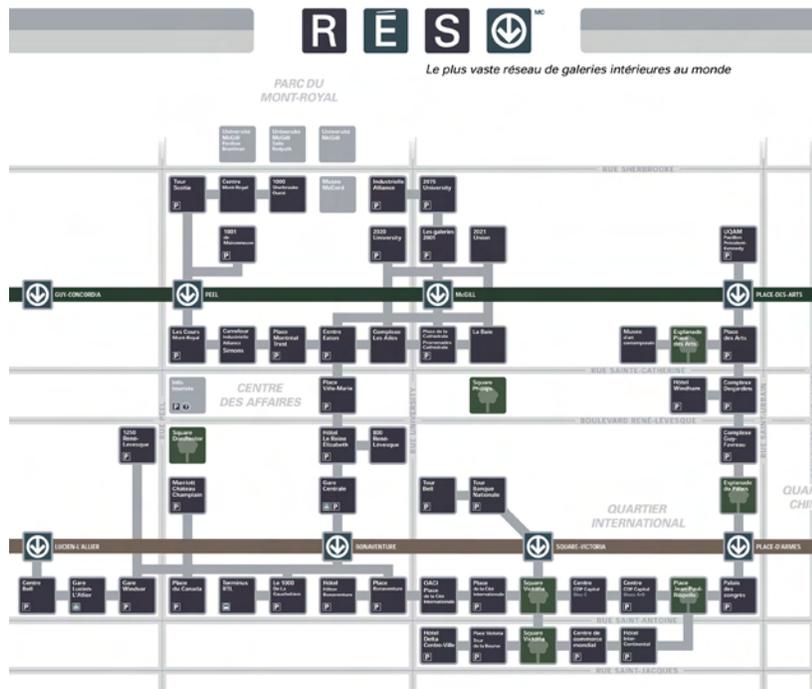
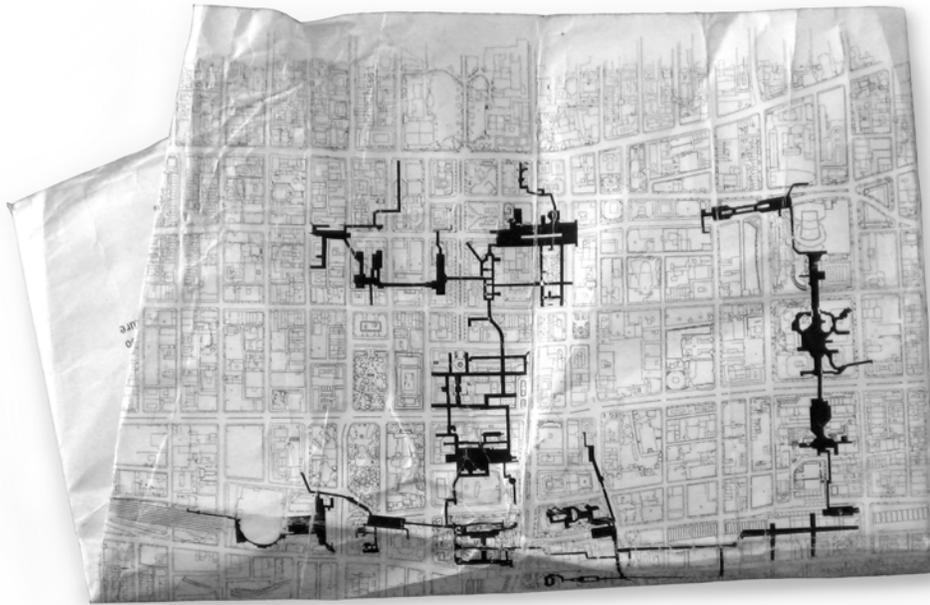
Figure 2.6
Tam Tams.

The island is visible from the peak of Mount Royal, the city's most celebrated geographic feature. At the base of this mountain on Sunday afternoons, is an event where several drum circles—instances of improvised hand-drumming in groups—casually form in the park [fig. 2.6]. The lawn at the base of Mount Royal becomes an urban beach, an informal practice site for the Cirque du Soleil, next to play-battles with Styrofoam swords, with people eating, drinking and throwing Frisbees in between. The main event on the lawn is a gathering of dozens of hand-drummers at the base of the Monument to Sir George-Étienne Cartier, a continuous rhythmic ceremony, affectionately called 'Tam Tams'. The pulse of synchronized drum beats is the ocean to this urban beach.

Figure 2.7
The skyline.
The urban core lying
in between two sites of
engagement.

In between these two places of celebration is the underground city, woven among the infrastructural web of the downtown core, usually bustling, but silently sleeping on Sundays. Along this string, there lie opportunities to connect to the other parts of the city, counteracting the conditions of the existing network with synesthetic explorations. These can be spaces of convergence, harbouring acoustic wormholes and experiential links. The network can be transformed into the site of all-night events, an unlikely place of engagement and excitement, elevating the underground city to the ranks of Mount-Royal and the islands. This is a city ripe for, and receptive to this kind of intervention.

Figure 2.8
Piknic Électronik.



Charting the Underground

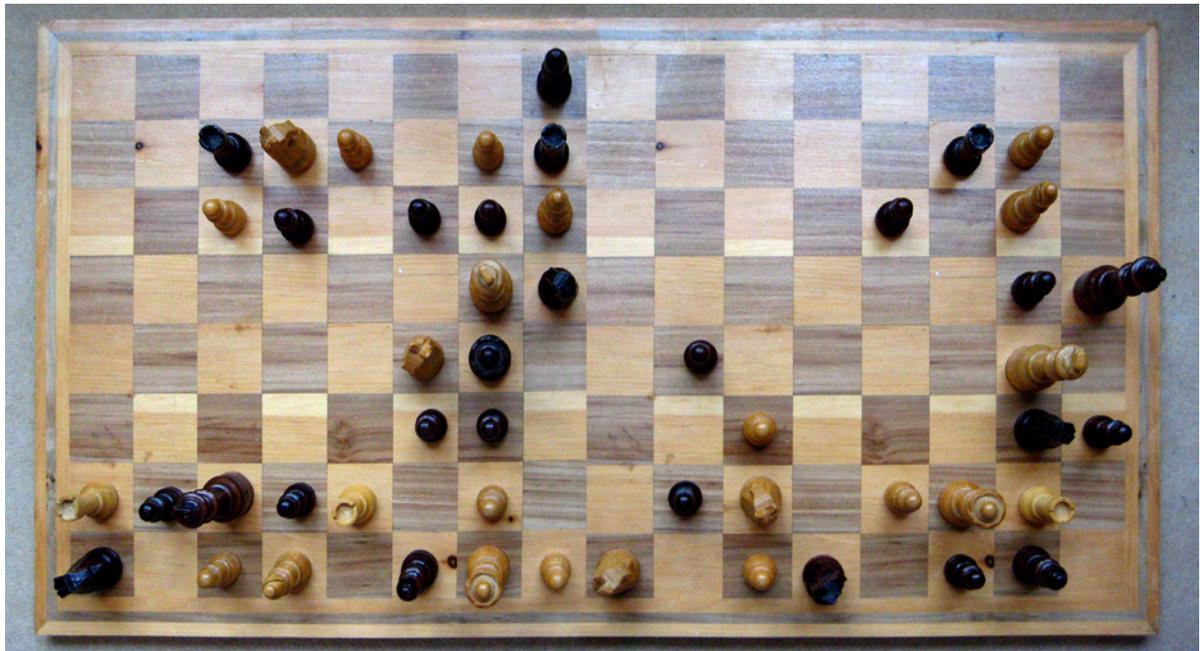
The following cartographic explorations chart the underground network, its accidents and deviations. Representing the fractured and improvisational character of the underground city is a task that faces basic challenges. In order to represent multiple levels in plan, liberties are often exercised: merging floors, or excluding instances of vertical circulation. The City of Montreal produced a way-finding map [fig. 2.10] that reduced the complexity of the interior spaces to a set of labeled squares, articulating differentiation only between properties. The vertically variable and tentacular qualities of the interior city resists traditional forms of mapping. Moreover, traditional spatial representation does little to communicate the experiential aspects of this place.

Figure 2.9
Wayfinding map 1.
Carried during my
initial explorations of the
underground city.

The drawing set printed on acetate [figs. 2.17-2.26] resembles an x-ray print locating a spreading cancer; the over-commercialized anesthetic city. Reminiscent of clear layered anatomical drawings, the sections of encyclopedias that I was always playfully drawn to as a child, Montreal's downtown core is dissected into a stack of plan sections. The format of this book is momentarily suspended. Layered transparencies sequence a descent into the territory of the underground city, each page cutting further downward, while a ghostly worm's eye plan accumulates on the left. The drawings set is generated by two section planes descending in 10m increments, revealing the underground city's location relative to the topography of Montreal. The darkest tones denote a cut through the urban terrain, and the light tones denote ground within 10m beyond.



Figure 2.10
Wayfinding map 2.
An official network map.



The Great Khan's chessmen were huge pieces of polished ivory: arranging on the board looming rooks and sulky knights, assembling swarms of pawns, drawing straight or oblique avenues like the queen's progress, Marco recreated the perspectives and the spaces of black and white cities on moonlit nights.⁸

An impossible chess game: two boards merged together forming a map of the underground, evoking the madness and confusion of the city, inspired by the techniques of Marco Polo. The limits of the square board are cleared, doubling the range of the rooks and queens. Disoriented, they can't stop looking at their mirror image standing a few squares away.

Pawns: linked together in a combative position forming a string of connected, yet competing commercial spaces.

Queens: infrastructural connections, interweavings.

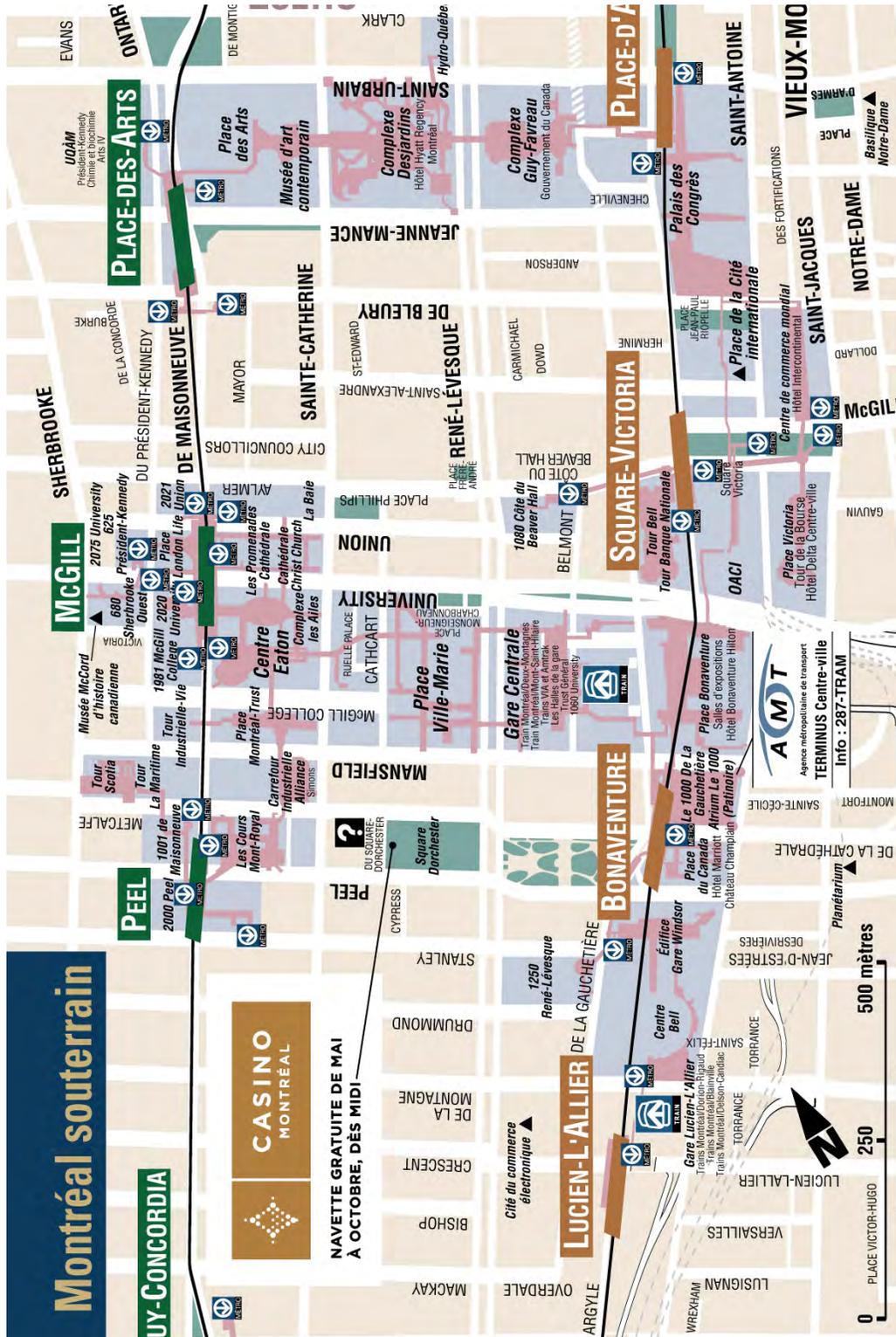
Kings: grand civic spaces, silent reflections.

Knights and Bishops: tunnels defying the grid, connecting different interior spaces.

Rooks: metro stations, burrowed far enough underground to allow smooth vectors of motion.



Figure 2.11
Double checkmate.
A snapshot of forces
that shape the city,
a moment in the
dynamic process.



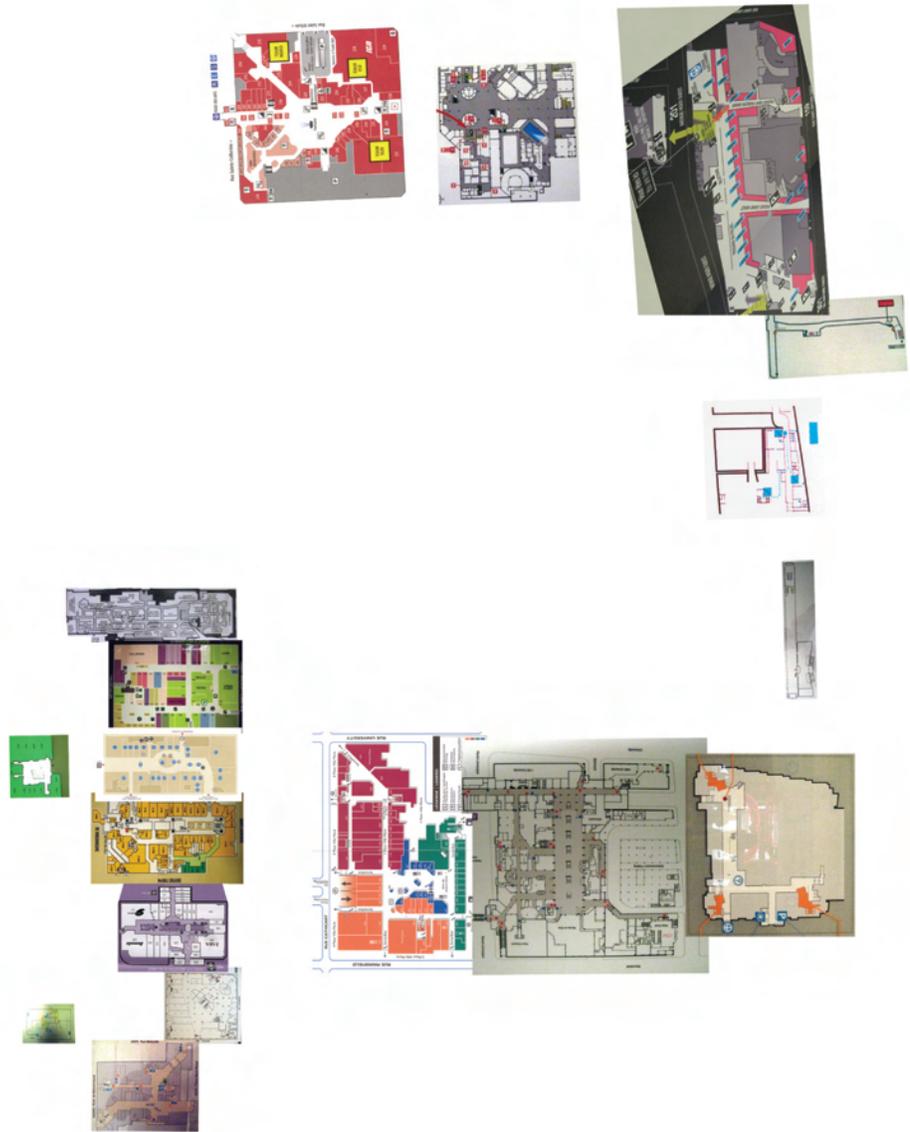
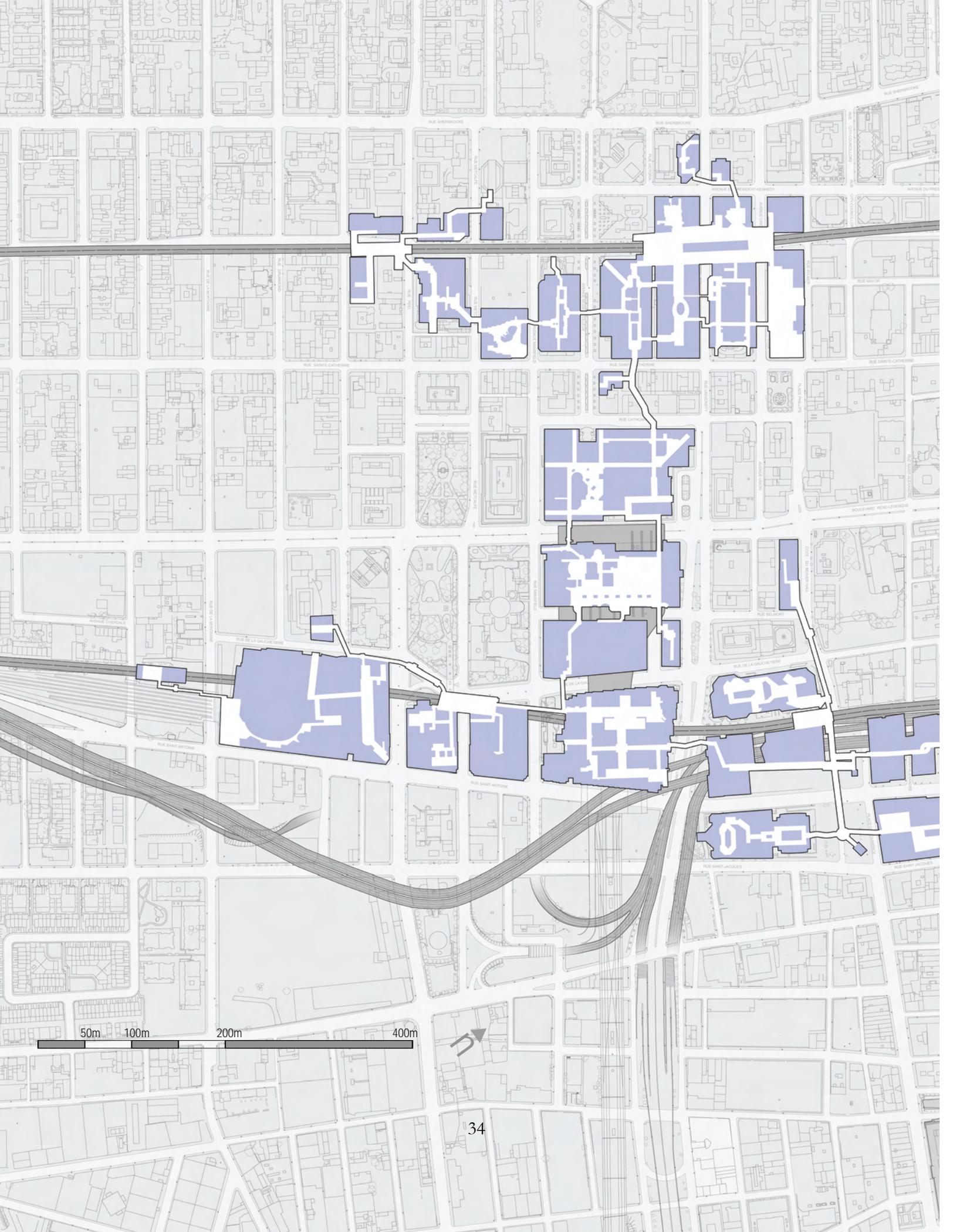


Figure 2.12 (left)
Wayfinding map 3.
An official STM map.



Figure 2.13
Wayfinding directory collage.
Compiled from all visible mall
directories and fire escape
plans in the network.



50m 100m 200m 400m



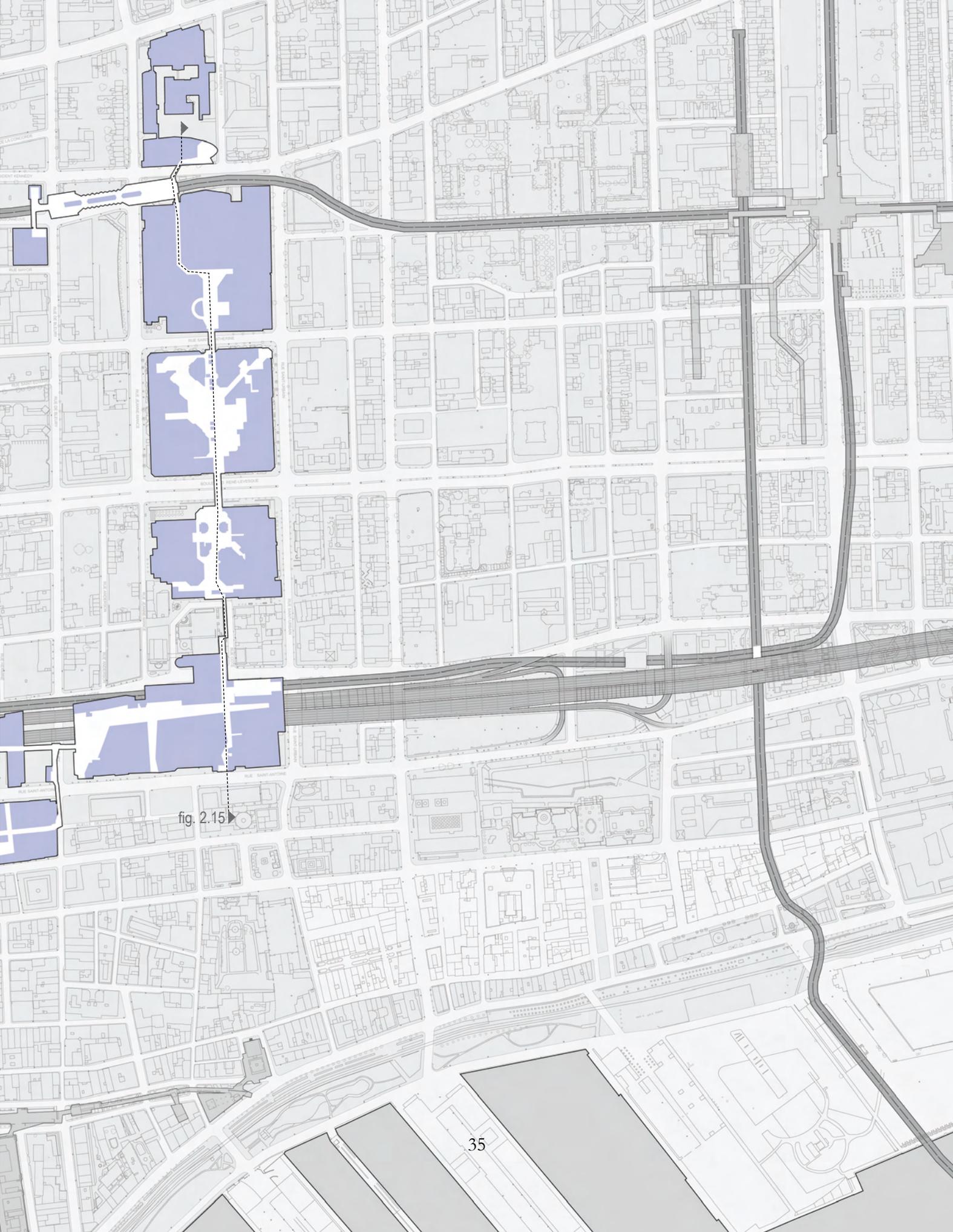
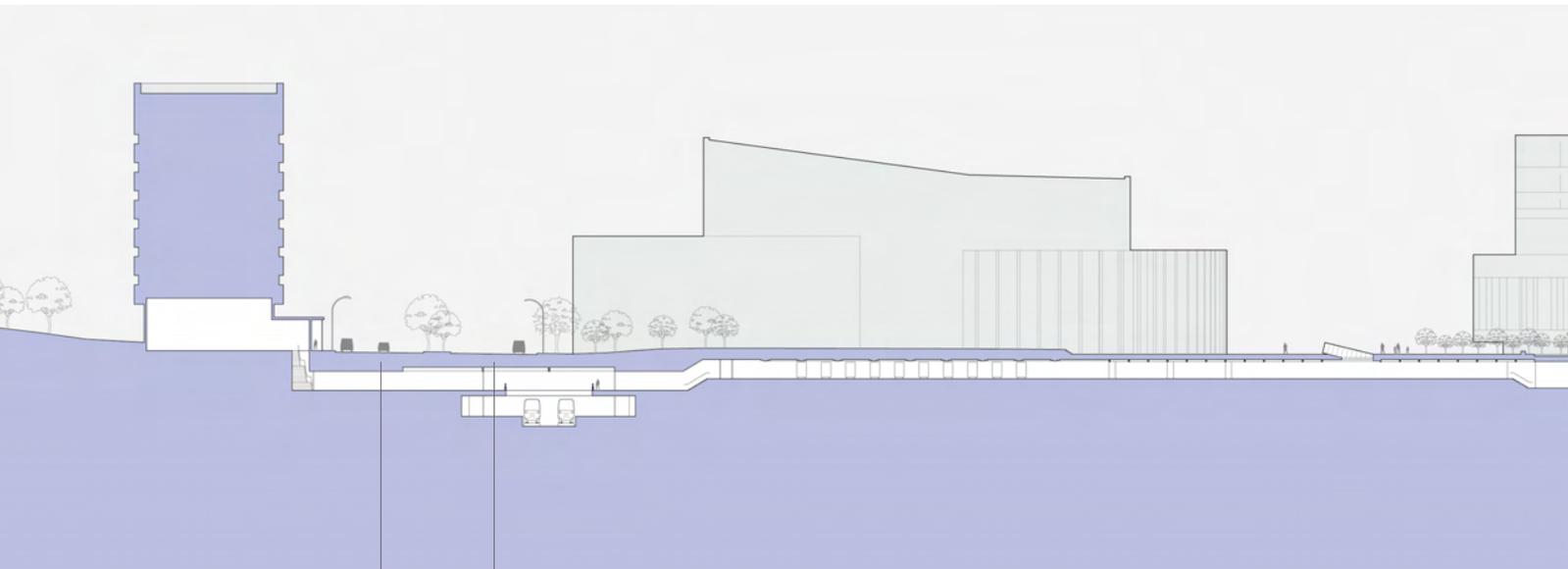
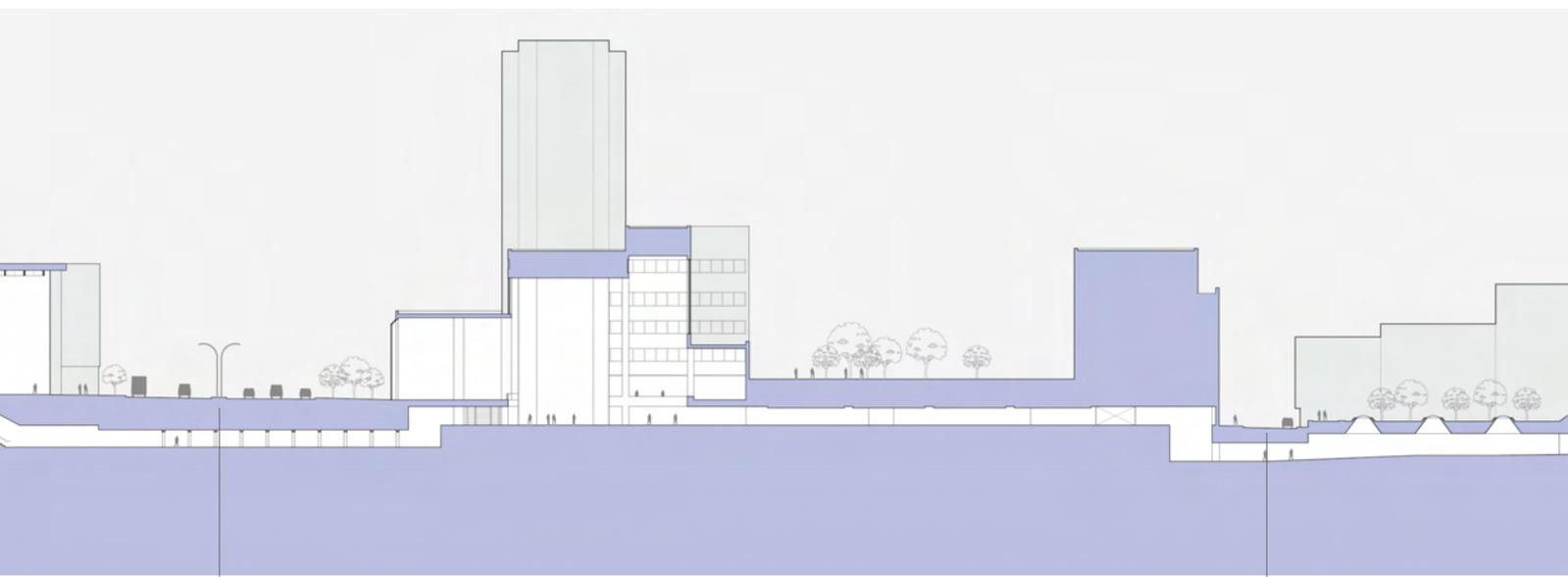


fig. 2.15



Rue Ontario

Boulevard De
Maisonneuve



Boulevard
René-Lévesque

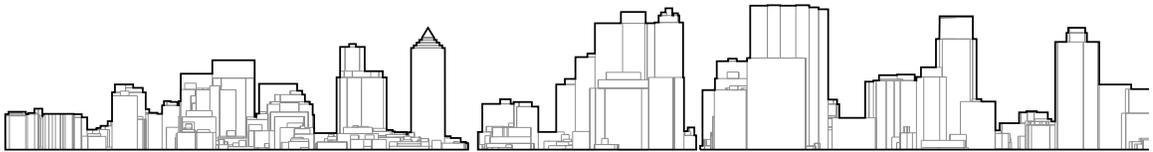
Rue Cheneville



Figure 2.14 (pages 34-35)
Site Plan.



Figure 2.15
Site Section.



- [Fig. 2.17]
- [Fig. 2.18]
- [Fig. 2.19]
- [Fig. 2.20]
- [Fig. 2.21]
- [Fig. 2.22]
- [Fig. 2.23]
- [Fig. 2.24]
- [Fig. 2.25]
- [Fig. 2.26]

Figure 2.16
Key Figure.



Figure 2.17



Figure 2.18

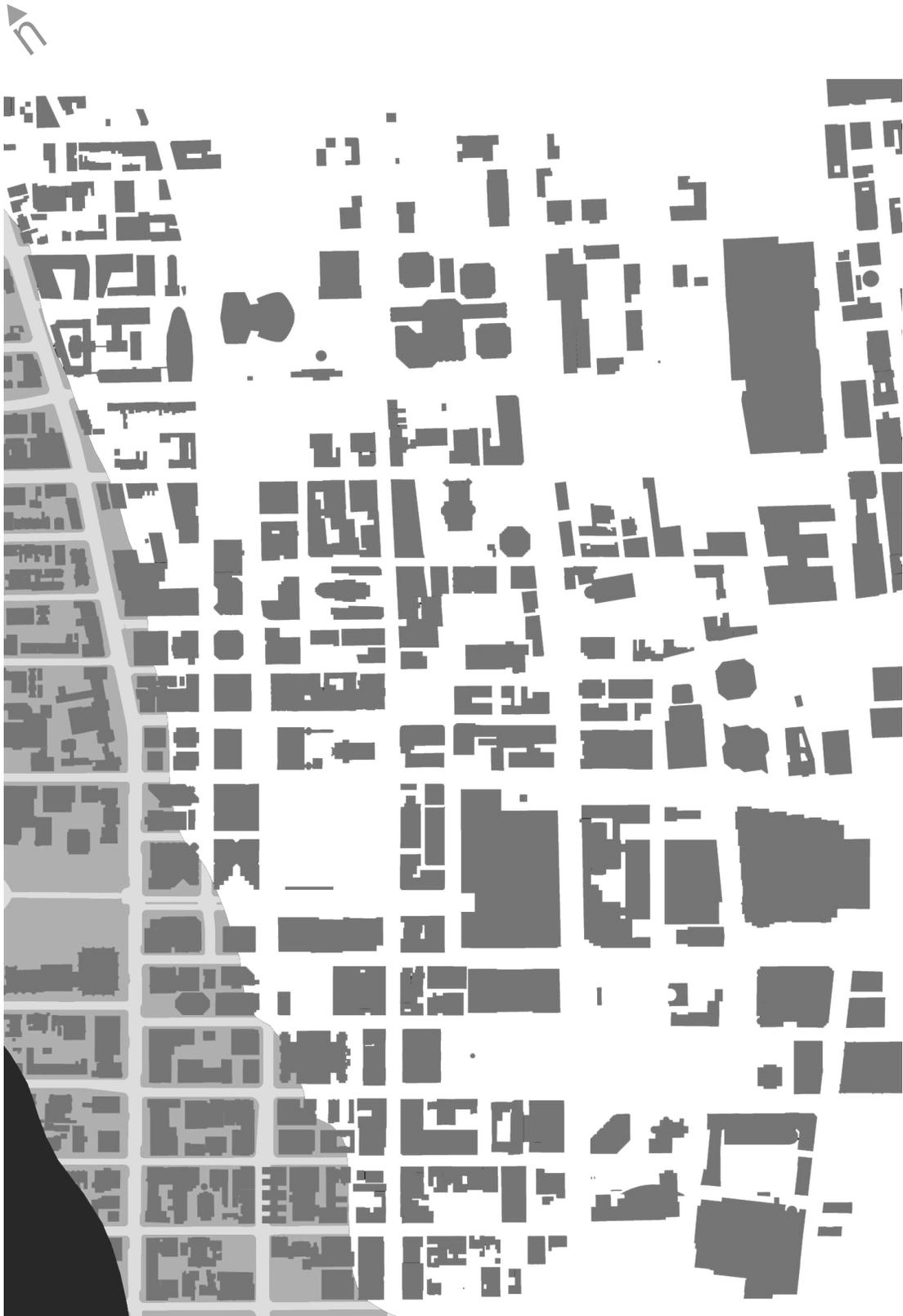


Figure 2.19



Figure 2.20



Figure 2.21



Figure 2.22



Figure 2.23

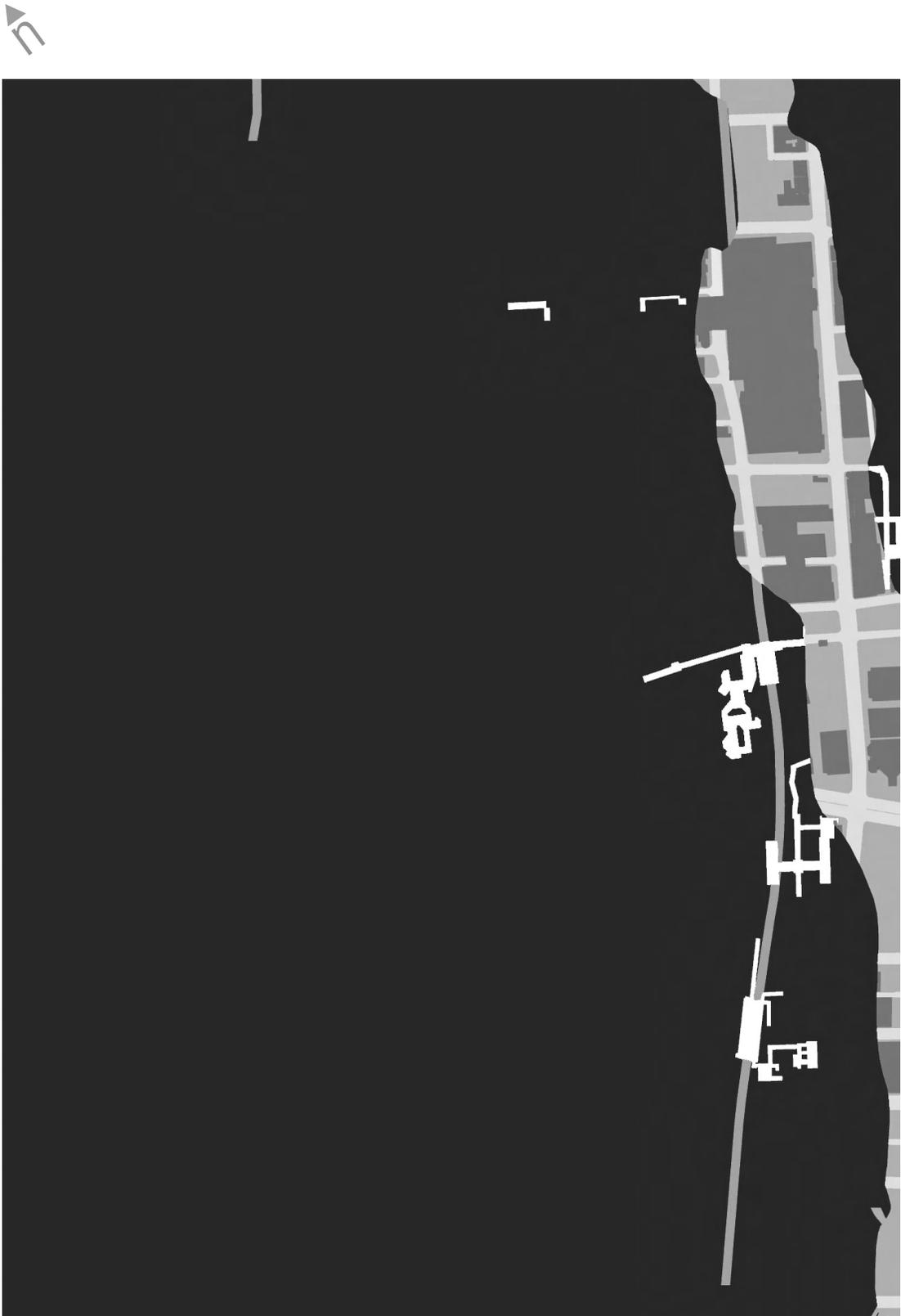


Figure 2.24

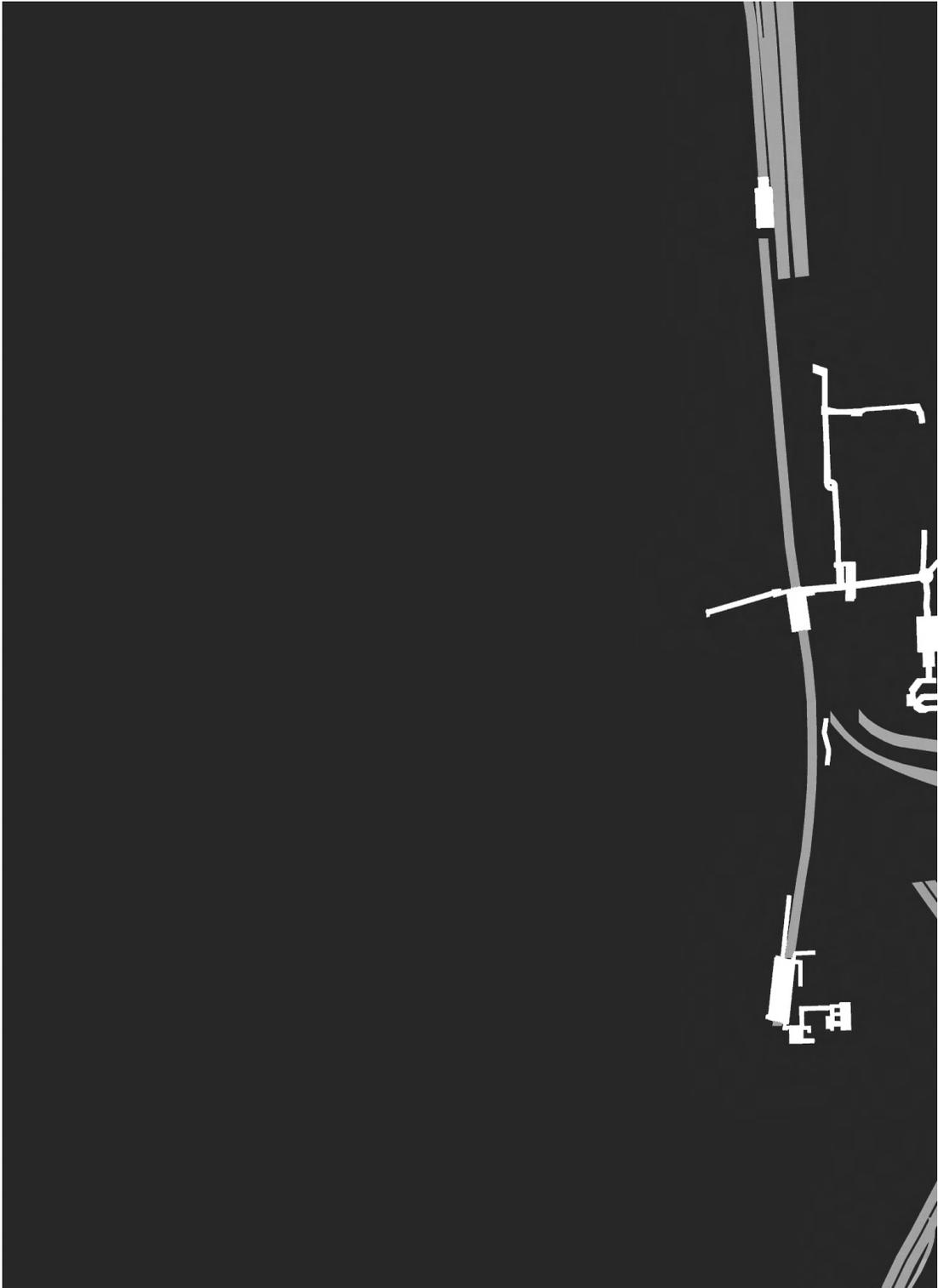


Figure 2.25



Figure 2.26

Endnotes

1. Cohen (1963, 114)
2. Benjamin (2002, 444)
3. Sijpkens (1997)
4. Lortie (2004, 152)
5. Wingrove (2008)
6. Sijpkens (1997)
7. Benjamin (2002, 3)
8. Calvino (1997, 122)

Figures 2.17 - 2.26
Plan sections on acetate.



3

Pseudo-Public Space: The Anesthetic City

pseudo: pretended; false or spurious; sham.¹

“Tonight the city is full of morgues
And all the toilets are overflowing
There’s shopping malls coming out of the walls
As we walk out among the manure”²
-Beck

“Phenomena like the tunnels in Montreal and Houston or
the skyways in Minneapolis are not simply about climate
control, they’re about social control and class suppression.”³
-Michael Sorkin

Montreal and Mental Life

Walking through the underground city, the flâneur frequently encounters a river of passing commuters, whose actions are inhibited by the familiarity of their daily routines, and by the environment of their practice: a string of privately policed commercial interiors. This chapter points to the ‘privatized mentality’ that spreads within this network of malls and tunnels. Anesthetic space is what Rem Koolhaas has termed Junkspace, unfelt, familiar, banal, blasé space, experienced as non-places by the majority of its occupants. Surrounded by crowds of thousands, and yet rarely engaging with anyone, these non-places are compounded by an extreme “reserve”. The privacy maintained by the users of these transitory spaces is partly the result of *Simmelian blasé*, “agitating the nerves to their strongest reactivity for such a long time that they finally cease to react at all,”⁴ as if a natural inclination to exercise one’s passions gets blown from overuse. Georg Simmel argues that through a variety of factors propagated in city life, the metropolitan develops such a strong “reserve”, that the collective social fabric foregoes a certain level of interaction.⁵ There is a significant overlap between Simmel’s diagnosed per-

Figure 3.1
The sterile city.
Devoid of oxygenated
blood flow.



Merci de
ne pas flâner

No Loitering
Thank You

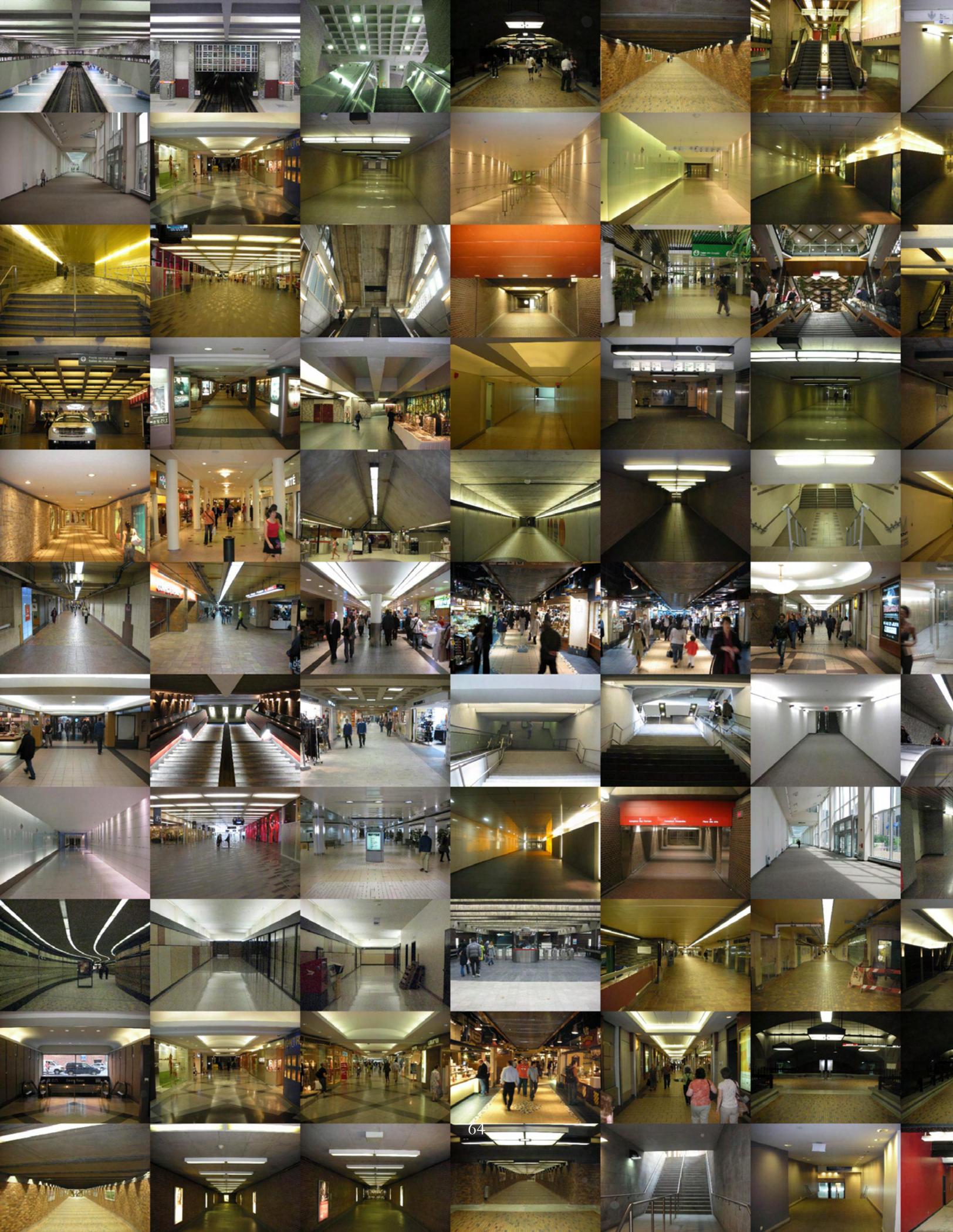
sonage, and the portrait of the privatized underground city user. In addition to climate control, these pedestrian tunnels exercise a social control, as “*pedestrian plumbing*”⁶, rendering their daily ritual heavily reserved. The metropolitan’s senses may be overblown, but those spaces which happen to be occupied on a daily basis are also *starving* the senses from the potentials of urban life. “Sometimes not an overload but its opposite, an absolute absence of detail, generates Junkspace.”⁷ The underground city is teeming with unfelt space, equally due to the agitating commute ritual and the complementary reserve of the space itself. They are blasé urban zones which complement Simmel’s strictly sociological diagnosis. These underground commercial spaces are, to some degree, stupefying corridors, leaving no valence for the desires of the flâneur or the drifter. The architecture that currently sustains this marathon of occupation is hopeless to serve the creative capacities of its occupants. These spaces are left lifeless in terms of their possibility to inspire and provoke.

Figure 3.2
Tom’s dream.
Coasting through his
crippling agoraphobia.

Gary Burns’ sardonic film *Waydowntown* tells of four twenty-something retail workers that bet on who can remain inside Calgary’s continuous interior network the longest. Despite this attempt to create a game out of their situation, each of them slowly lose their mind to paranoia and agoraphobia. Simmel’s metropolitan, on the other hand, “develops an organ protecting him against the threatening currents and discrepancies of his external environment.”⁸ The characters in Burns’ film lose their ability to maintain this protective psychic organ during their self-inflicted marathon in the privatized city.

Figure 3.3
Signage in the
Eaton Centre.
“The last promenade
for the flâneur”⁹

The anesthetic city is...



escaped by boarding the train, reached most quickly by taking the inside lane of the stairway that turns the corner, divided by parallel continuous railings for crowd control in the pedestrian tunnels linking building foundations, perfectly linear, completely visible from one end to the other to minimize crime, and two-thirds of the way through these tunnels are short banisters, relief from fatigue, and wind, because the pedestrian tunnels connecting to metro stations unintentionally act as plenums, wind tunnels that equalize the positive pressure created by the air-lunging arrival of the metro trains, while metro station name signs are paired with adverts, détourning municipally-voted station names with photos of models wearing mascara, but photography is typically not permitted in the underground city because unauthorized reproduction of the mall's interior design is considered a loss of potential profits, and flashes can annoy the shoppers amongst the scene, who may already be dwindling on the edge of total discomfort from white-noise, generated by fountains that fill the echo left by polished floors and walls, installed for convenient cleaning, while the fountain splashes mask the cacophony of pop music leaking out of each retail clothing store, next to benches for temporary rest, designed for discomfort to minimize loitering, impoverishing the sense of touch when for example, the simple act of opening a door, by placing the hand on a knob is replaced by motion-sensor technology, robbing the tactile, leaving no impression on the palm, but lowering the risk of spreading viral sickness, lowered further by every item in the public washroom being automated similarly, used between sessions of consuming product brands that appeal to the creation of personal identities, agents of disconnection, silk-screened or embroidered logos and images that project your chosen personality, so you can take a nap after the bell, after the closure of the lobby coffee shops, when the final subway train leaves the station, the booths empty, the doors lock, and the underground city sleeps.

Figure 3.4
Interior anesthesia.
A matrix of single
vanishing points, of
non-places, of air-condi-
tioned transition spaces.

Figure 3.5
Chronological
development.

62
69
79
89
99

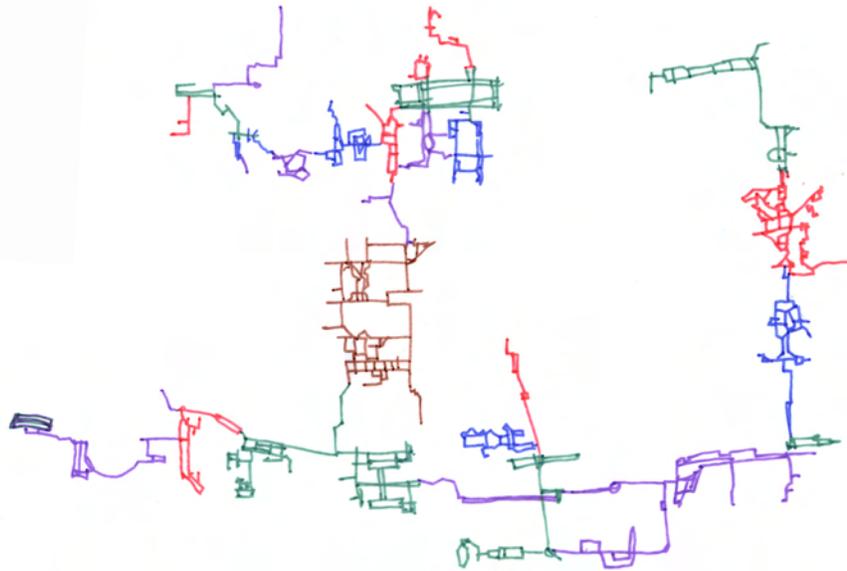


Figure 3.6
Tunnels vs. buildings.

tunnels
buildings

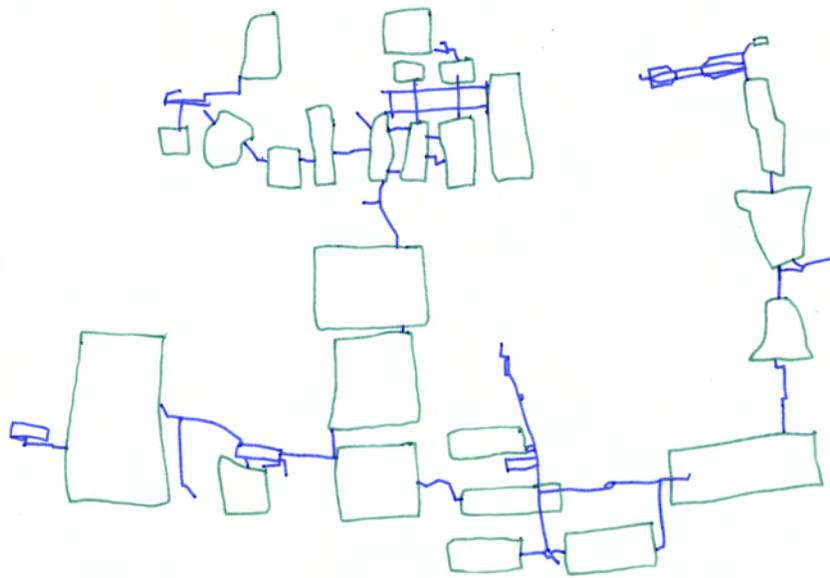


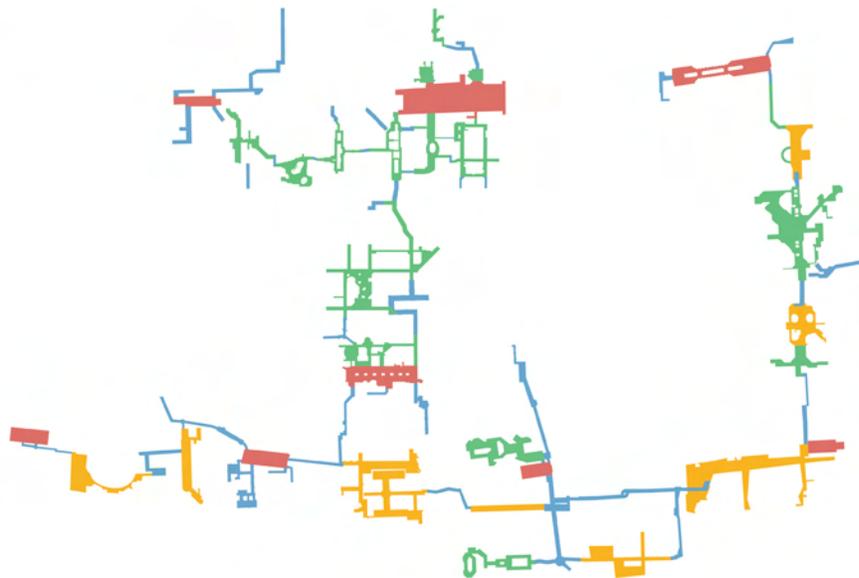
Figure 3.7
Vertical distribution.

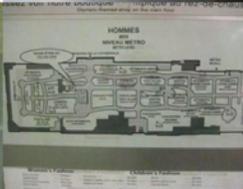
- Underground
- Underground + Ground
- Ground
- Above Ground



Figure 3.8
Programming.

- Circulation / Lobbies
- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Subway / Train





Pedestrian Plumbing

The sensual numbness caused by the concerted design tactics of private proprietors causes a bizarre form of experiential amnesia: “Because it cannot be grasped, junk-space cannot be remembered.”⁹ The generic interior is predigested, prescribed, painfully familiar. This kind of familiar space is relentlessly un-challenging, a relationship with which is developed through the practice of repeated routes to and from work. The RÉSO has been the site of so much impulse buying that the acts of consumption and excretion have merged into a single cathartic release of energy. Beck’s drone performance entitled ‘Pay no mind’ admits defeat to the proliferation of malls, saving himself by numbing his mind to the reality of walking out among overflowing toilets. “That’s why I pay no mind, pay no mind, pay no mind”¹⁰, a mantra facilitating numbness, repeated with each step through the manure. Excreta as a metaphor is also read in Montrealer Melvin Charney’s description of the RÉSO as “pedestrian plumbing”¹¹, likening forced flow pedestrian tunnels to the efficiency of sewage management, as if the end of a work day signals a flush that empties office towers into the underground city, where commuters are filtered through anesthesia before being sent home by the public transit tunnels. Rem Koolhaas echoes these critiques in his ‘Junk-Space’ essay, where his written words blend into a repetitive recycling, a *dérive* through mindless, senseless space, as if walking through waste. At best, embarrassment plagues each commuter’s daily practice, propagating a reserved, ‘privatized mentality’, generating a spatial ambiance of non-imagination and inhibition. “The department store is the last promenade for the *flâneur*.”¹²

Ultimately, this thesis is a reaction to the limitations of public interiors, and a provocation to transgress their private walls. Seen through the lens of the *flâneur*, there is an opportunity for a sorcerer’s transformation of this spatial detritus, to conjure a curiosity towards what lies *beyond*. Beneath the veneer of pseudo-public space lie unknowns, catalysts for de-familiarization, and re-sensualization. The ideas and images in the following chapters promote a sensibility to certain encounters and experi-

Figure 3.9
You are here.
A desperate search for orientation in the anesthetic city, as claustrophobia sets in.

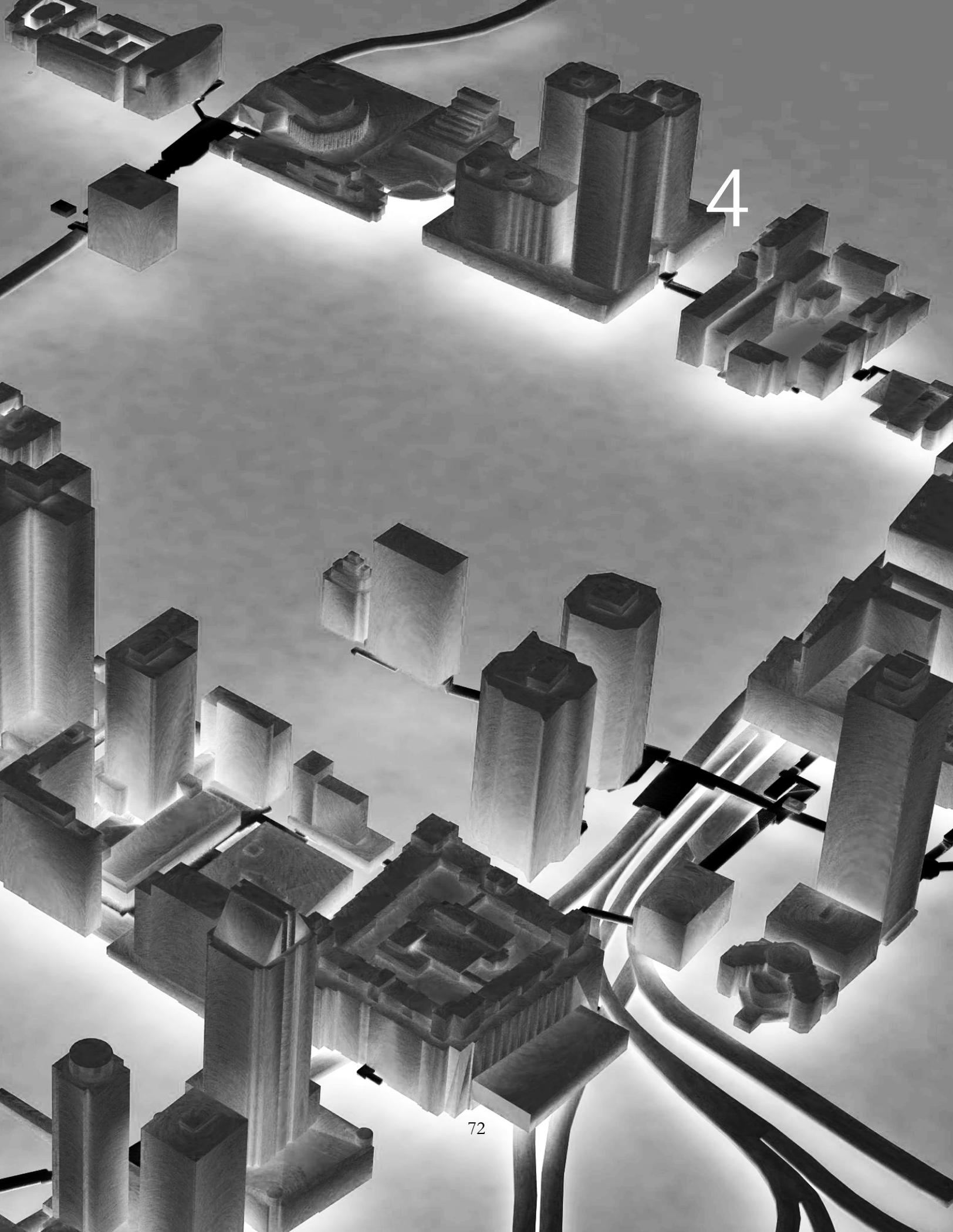


ences in the city that come to light with an attunement to the psychogeography of the transgressor. Transgression, a practice harbouring the potential for urban transformation, confronts the myriad of thresholds between “excretion and appropriation, two polarized human impulses.”¹³ The significance of the flâneur, drifter, gleaner, and other urbanists, is in their power to transform forgotten, discarded parts of the city into meaningful places charged with wonder and sensuality. This thesis further speculates on the urbanist’s power to affect not just the discarded city, but the *anesthetized* city, through acts of transgression. They are treated herein as a means to enrich the experience of a docile downtown core, and uncover the city as a locus of pleasure.

Endnotes

1. “pseudo”.(Retrieved Oct 28, 2009). Online Dictionary. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/pseudo>
2. Beck “Pay No Mind (Snoozer)” Mellow Gold, 1994.
3. Lortie (2004, 153)
4. Simmel (1950, 413)
5. *ibid.*
6. Sijpkens (1997)
7. Koolhaas (2004, 167)
8. Simmel (1950, 411)
9. Koolhaas (2004, 163)
10. Beck “Pay No Mind (Snoozer)” Mellow Gold, 1994.
11. Sijpkens (1997)
12. Benjamin (2002, 10)
13. Alison et al. (1995, 20)

Figure 3.10
A complacent ambiance.



4

72

The Tunnels of The Underground City

“Junkspace [...] is always interior, so extensive that you rarely perceive limits; it promotes disorientation by any means (mirror, polish, echo).”¹

-Rem Koolhaas

“In the past, those who had ideas they wished to communicate had the unquestioned right to disseminate those ideas in the open marketplace. Now that the marketplace has a roof over it, and is called a mall, we should not abridge that right.”²

-Solomon Wachtler

The Mega-Interior

This chapter discusses the socio-political factors that have shaped Montreal’s mega-interior, identifying the quintessential architectural maneuver that makes such networks possible: the connective tunnels.

The major excavation projects for the regional trains and subways established the first pedestrian tunnels connecting Place Ville-Marie to Central Station.³ Expansion of the tunnels went on for 35 years after the World Exposition of 1967.⁴ The most characteristic spaces of the underground city are its pedestrian tunnels, often relentless non-places, *dérive* propellers built simply to provide indoor access between buildings and subway stations. Now, Montreal’s pedestrian promenades connect to the foundations of office towers, which generally adhere to the architectural typology of the commercial podium. Attached to public transit, commercial space and office towers, the network accesses places that half a million people go to on an average day. But the underground city has blurry borders. Its territory may be entered without even realizing it because much of the space it includes has floors at street level and sometimes higher [fig. 3.7]. Today, the underground city is comprised of over 30 downtown building

Figure 4.1
Connective tissue



interiors.⁵ The mixed-use mega-buildings that typify the metropolis have in this case merged into a continuous mega-interior, connecting beneath the street level in as direct a manner as possible, funneling crowds of commuters to neighbouring interiors and public transit stations.

In 1965, to realize metro station plans, a new law had to be passed which allowed the City of Montreal to occupy space beneath private parcels of land.⁶ Similar to selling 'air rights' above rails and highways, the space above the metro excavation could then be developed, with direct access to the stations. Hence the title of the city's promotional brochure announcing its offer: "2,000,000 people in your own basement".⁷ After the World Exposition of 1967, the world was watching Montreal undergo an unprecedented urban transformation. Like Coney Island in New York City, Île Saint-Hélène, the site of the Expo '67, would serve as a laboratory for Montreal's urban experimentation.⁸ The architectural experimentation that took place during this event would begin to shape the future of Montreal. The underground city's first corridors were among Montreal's early urban experiments, dreamt as part of a vibrant mega-interior, where cars, trains, and pedestrian promenades occupy an interconnected multi-level city.

Figure 4.2
Man and his world.
The theme slogan for
the Expo echoed in the
ambitious transforma-
tions that ensued

The Mythical Underground

The word 'underground' carries with it powerful images, charged with the connotation of a world lying latent beneath our everyday, an unconscious vibratory presence. Synonymous with 'sub-culture', the underground is the site of resistance and upheaval, the physical site of human burial, of crypts and catacombs; also of garbage, sewage handling and storm drain networks. "Where else can one find reality and myth, banality and mystery, refuge and menace as close to each other as under the earth?"⁹ The word 'underground' paired with 'city' now begins to conjure worlds of science fiction, fantastical subterranean landscapes, or secret societies and dark burrowing tunnels. It corresponds to the alter-

Figure 4.3
Guatemala sinkhole.
The menacing potential
of soft earth flowing
beneath the concrete
crust of cities.



native city, the unseen and *unknown* city. The network's common title competes with its somewhat more 'official' labels 'RÉSO' and 'indoor city'. Despite the often banal reality of its corridors, the persistence of the 'underground city' as an unofficial title is a testament to Montreal's romantic associations with—and aspirations for—its subterranean labyrinth.

The underground city is a tourist attraction, but excited visitors who expect something comparable to Cappadocia's caves in Turkey are left puzzled, in search of the ambiance that the name connotes. The 'subterranean labyrinth' is a dream, an idea constructed by the imaginative urbanist. Lost amidst a drift, "the space winks at the flâneur."¹⁰ Which way will lead you out of here? The constellation of tunnels poses a challenge to orient oneself, beyond the capacity of way-finding signage. A response to the experience of being lost in the underground city arouses this notion of the labyrinth, "that ancient dream of humanity."¹¹ The flâneur uncovers this ambient reading of the underground city, a realm of way-finding, like a *New Babylonian* riddle, where "the disorientation which furthers adventure, play and creative change is privileged."¹²

The Labyrinth of Consumption

Less romantically however, the labyrinthine character of these circuitous interiors was employed by private developers to maximize the clientele of interior commercial lots. Rapid commercial development of the 1970's saw the strategy of manipulating pedestrian flow by forcing commuters through retail centers while directing blank uninviting building faces to the street.¹³ This strategy proved economically successful to the point that the City of Montreal administration of the early 90s issued a moratorium on the construction of additional connections to the network, as a means to stunt the growing interior, and ease competition with suffering commercial streets such as Saint Catherine.¹⁴ Throughout its growth, shopping has been the most common pastime in

Figure 4.4
Chasing Harry Lime.
The culprit, seeking
invisibility in Vienna's
underground.



R E S  MC

the underground city, boasting convenient access and occasional large open spaces drawing in natural light. As was the trend in mall design, developers resorted to purposefully circuitous layouts. Eaton Center now occupies the space that was formerly Les Terrasses, a mall whose circulation design forced people past several levels of shops before connecting to adjacent properties. These interior corridors were purposefully designed in an indirect manner to generate foot traffic near a large number of commercial lots. Faced with daily mobs of commuters, frustrated by the inefficiency of the space, Les Terrasses was eventually demolished and replaced by the current Eaton Center, setting a precedent for how much manipulation of pedestrian movement a public will bear.¹⁵

To refresh its image, and attempt to improve its way-finding performance, the building consortium eventually branded itself with the pseudonym RÉSO (from *réseau*, ‘network’). The branding effort repeated its logo throughout the interior network with occasional cardinal orientation graphics. Competing for attention with the barrage of visuals that saturate the underground city yields a limited success for the way-finding program. The RÉSO brand is absorbed into the familiarized environment of the commuter, another logo to consume alongside backlit advertisements. In the end, branding is antithetical to the multiplex city.

Figure 4.5
Les Terrasses.
An interior obstacle
course worthy of a
Parkour attack.

A Punctured Shield

“Unwittingly, all architects may be working on the same building, so far separate, but with hidden receptors that will eventually make it cohere.”¹⁶ Subterranean pedestrian tunnels represent the connective tissue of the network, tying individual spaces with a direct corridor, resistant to commercial programming, dedicated simply to moving people from one end to the other. An odd respite from the onslaught of the mall, the tunnels seem to be owned by no one. They are typically blank, simple spaces whose shape adheres to building code by-laws. Another ubiquitous

Figure 4.6
Interior branding.
Between retail stores,
the commuting space
itself is ripe for con-
sumption.



Figure 4.7
Tunnel at Square
Victoria.

construction, the *shield* of the mall, is an instrument for keeping people shopping within the commercial space. It is a form of perimeter control for retail centers, whereby the merchants' lots and the interior architecture achieve a relatively sealed condition. The tunnels effectively puncture this shield, creating a new threshold of exit, or entry in a manner that bypasses the exterior street entirely. While connectivity is a common goal of the underground city, there is also motive for private owners to maintain autonomy, to keep people from wandering into a neighbouring retail center with which it is competing. This profit motive conflicts with the goal of connectivity. It is also the reason for the limited success of the way-finding signage program implemented in the underground city. (The 'PATH' way-finding program in Toronto faced identical challenges). It is in the best interest of mall owners to keep you shopping in their space, while balancing the advantages of connectivity. Furthermore, increasing pedestrian traffic with the use of connective tunnels actually raises the insurance costs for building owners, given that an influx of otherwise unaccounted-for building users now roam through, increasing risk of mischief, or other contingencies. Insurers tax this rise of risk, whereas the same rise in contingencies can be seen as a catalyst for diverse social environments, increasing the richness of urban ambiances, conditions inherent in the ambition of a multi-level city.

Figure 4.8
Tunnel at Complexe
Guy-Favreau.

Puncturing the mall shield, and linking spaces together creates new *situations*. The overwhelmingly positive response by Montrealers to the pedestrian tunnels makes it unlikely for a building owner to sever ties from the network, especially when considering its success, and the resulting increase in clientele. With the introduction of the tunnels (additional means of exit and entrance) the mall shield, for the merchant, oscillates between pain and pleasure, delicately balancing risk and reward. Puncturing the foundation walls of mega-buildings and subsequently grafting them to new corridors is an architectural operation symbolic of a newly created threshold, which converges into an

Figure 4.9
Tunnel at the Eaton
Centre.



ambiguous continuity. It is treated herein as a springboard for further architectural provocations.

The potential for transformation in the underground lies in its tunnels. Despite a windowless, straight-forwardly laid out type of interior, the latent vibrancy of these places are their proximity to unseen neighbours. Beyond the opaque walls of these tunnels lie opportunities to forge new connections. The following photo series documents moments within the tunnels of the underground. The tone of the images do not resonate with an anesthetic place, instead they depict moments of disclosure, in a place that is on the verge of revealing itself.

Figure 4.10
In the palais.



Figure 4.11
Near the Palais.

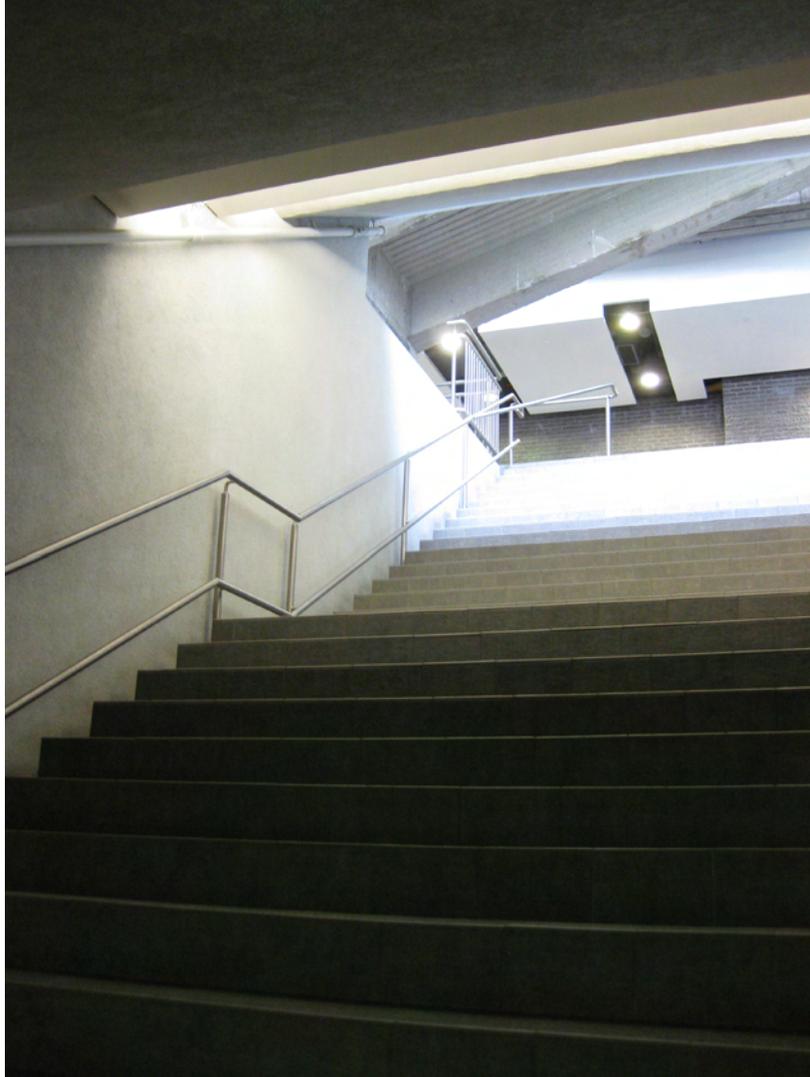


Figure 4.12
Near Bonaventure.

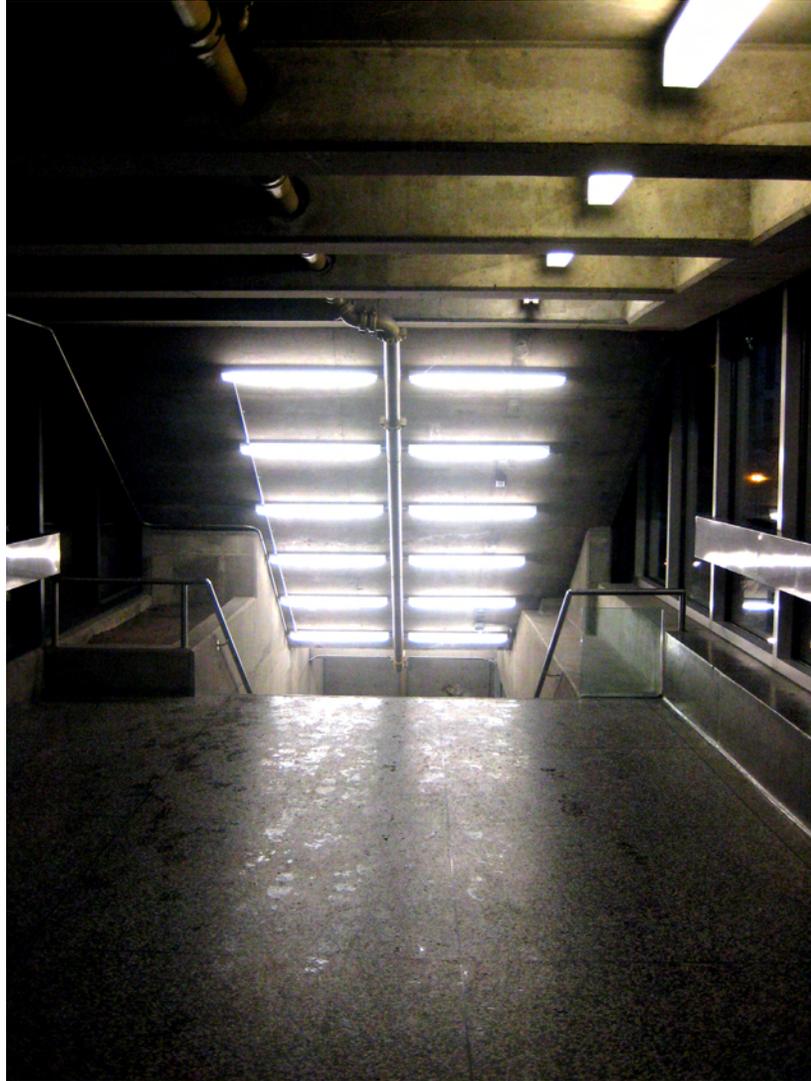


Figure 4.13
Near Guy-Favreau.



Figure 4.14
Place des Arts.



Figure 4.15
Near Square Victoria.



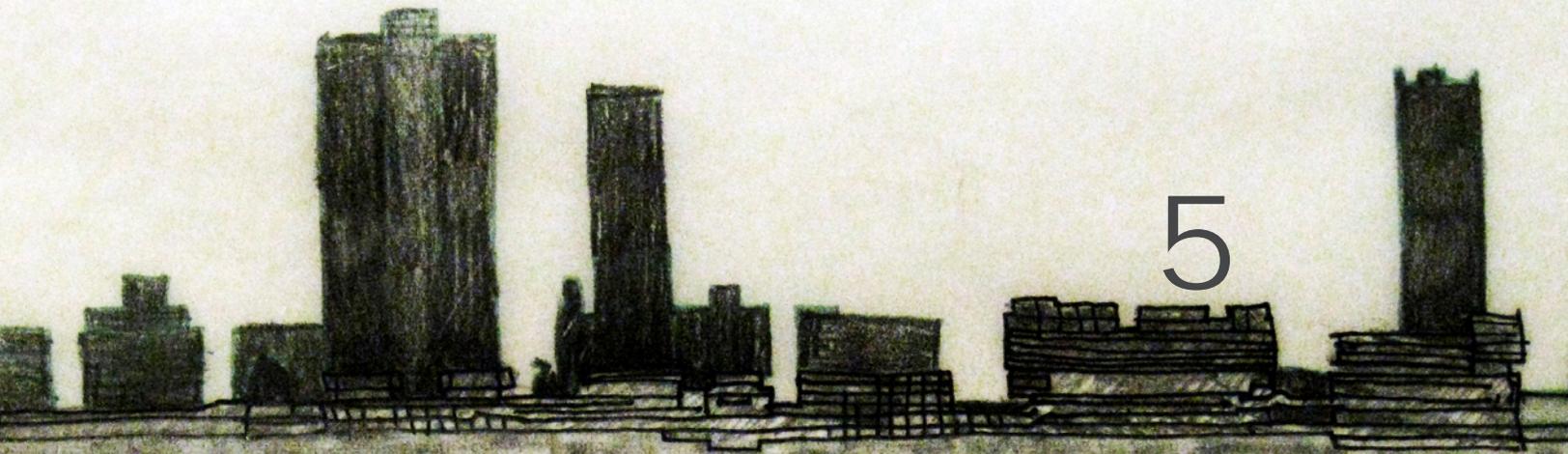
Figure 4.16
Near Eaton Center.



Endnotes

1. Koolhaas (2004, 162)
2. Schiller (1989, 101)
3. Sijpkens (1997)
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*
6. Lortie (2004, 164)
7. *ibid.*
8. Koolhaas (1994, 30)
9. Seidel et al. (1998, 10)
10. Benjamin (2002, 419)
11. *ibid.* (2002, 429)
12. Andreotti (1996, 167)
13. Sijpkens (1997)
14. *ibid.*
15. *ibid.*
16. Koolhaas (2004, 162)

Figure 4.17
Beneath Square Victoria.



Exploring the Wayward

wayward: turning away from what is right or proper; willful; disobedient.¹

“In the sinuous folds of old capital cities,
where everything, even horror, turns to magic,
I am constantly on the watch, driven by my ineluctable
whims, for certain singular beings, decrepit and delightful.”²

-Charles Baudelaire

“Transgression opens the door into what lies beyond the
limits usually observed, but it maintains these limits just the
same. Transgression is complementary to the profane world,
exceeding its limits but not destroying it.”³

-Georges Bataille

Forbidden Edges

The following material regarding spaces of transgression is intended to frame the design approach in the final chapter. Transgressive activity is constitutive to playful urban exploration, and unconventional appropriation of public space. This chapter suggests a means to confront the persistence of anesthesia in the underground city, by exploring wayward desires and approaching an *urban eroticism*.

Thresholds between the familiar and the unknown delineate a playing field wherein the *wayward* emerges as the object of a game. Thresholds are ingrained in the city, taking shape into forbidden ‘edge conditions’ that manifest as zones restricted from pedestrian access. Such zones include subway tunnels or construction sites, for example, in each case lines separating *all-access* areas from *authorized-access* areas. These thresholds exist for safety, for the functional order of the city. Here, I am not suggesting an elimination of these edges but rather, through a series of archi-

Figure 5.1
Sinking roots.
The transformation of
the underground begins
with coaxing distant
depths.



tectural provocations, to coax the users of the underground city towards crossing similar thresholds and experiencing the consequence of these acts: a variety of nuances in transgressive behaviour. This thesis partly approaches urban space in an anarchic manner, operating under a degree of authoritative dissolution, while also recognizing the presence of existing authorities and power structures as a necessary counterpart to wayward experience. Transgression necessitates both the familiar (in part shaped by authoritative structures) and its *becoming*: the discovery of profane layers within the familiar.

The Erotic

An unavoidable reciprocity exists between the familiar and the unknown. Any attempt to exceed the limits of the familiar must also preserve its edges. However, the impulse to exceed the familiar is a basic desire and is not inherently hostile. George Bataille draws on the 'erotic', a term typically limited to sexuality, and broadens it to describe a spiritual situation that intensely bonds people together through experience, collective experience. Bataille's model of erotic pleasure develops the dynamic interplay between experiences of 'continuity' and 'discontinuity', where erotic acts momentarily dissolve the independence of individuals (their discontinuity) to realize a universal continuity of passion, between two people, between a person and a place, between life and death.⁴ If we follow Bataille, the moments of continuity sought in the erotic are of crucial importance for social and urban life. Hence, the architect cannot remain indifferent to this desire for continuity and the desire to *momentarily* exceed the familiar.

Figure 5.2
Frank and Dorothy.
Frank's fetish is in
altering his state of
consciousness while
engaging sensually.

Bernard Tschumi's *Architecture and Disjunction* discusses architecture's erotic capacity, and transgression within design practice. Tschumi identifies the junction of space and concept, "a momentary and sacrilegious convergence of real space and ideal space"⁵, as excessive. 'Excessive', as in exceeding a prescription of

**Sensuality has been known
to overcome even the
most rational of buildings.**



VILLASAVOYE, 1965

Architecture is the ultimate erotic act.
Carry it to excess and it will reveal
both the traces of reason and the sensual
experience of space. Simultaneously.

form or function, emancipating life from a state of rationality.

Architecture seems to survive in its erotic capacity only wherever it negates itself, where it transcends its paradoxical nature by negating the form that society expects of it. In other words, it is not a matter of destruction or avant-garde subversion but of transgression.⁶

Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye—architecture as a well-oiled machine, fell into a state of disrepair in the 60s. Plaster began to fall from the structure and its interior was littered with human waste. Tschumi argues that in this state the architecture reached an erotic fruition, where life and death ambiguously converged in his perception of the decrepit villa. Like the Situationists' *situation*, and Lefebvre's *moments*, Tschumi identifies *the rotten point*, a point in time when architecture has the capacity to resolve the paradoxical divide between architectural concept and sensual experience. This separation returns, inevitably, as did the good condition of the Villa Savoye. The villa reached a natural limit in its decrepit state. In this new condition however, Tschumi perceived the limit as a threshold, through which he found delight. This pleasure was conjured only through a subversion of the villa's hyper-rational inception.

The momentary nature of the erotic is treated here as a condition of spatial ambiance. Tschumi's rotten point, while appreciating the excess of decay, foregoes the erotic capacity of everyday spaces, and the constitutional role of transgression in playful, explorative behaviour. Erotic passion cruises beyond the thresholds of the unknown, momentarily concealed beside the discontinuous, familiar city. To achieve continuity requires the city's senses tuned to discovering secrets, while maintaining its forbidden edges.

Figure 5.3
Savoye, in excess.
Subverting cleanliness
and rationality, with
excrement and vega-
bondage.



Play Space

In crossing the forbidden edge, the value of play must be recognized as a means to charge it with a ludic curiosity, a motive to explore. In support and further development of Johan Huizinga's *play theory*, as discussed in *Homo Ludens*, Liane Lefaivre and the design firm Studio Döll point to the activities in the city that take place beyond necessity, beyond prescribed function, in "an attempt to lift these notions up from the lower depths to which they have sunk in the opinion of architects and urbanists".⁷ Contrasting the predominantly functional urban zones of the familiar city with the behaviourally indeterminate qualities of children's playgrounds, the text reads:

There is a need for an inspiring alternative that cultivates the potential for homo ludens in an urban context. A small change in a word, from playground to play space, opens the door to a new perspective. Play space represents mental freedom, and leeway to deviate from the rules.⁸

Reciprocity between rules and deviation are celebrated in this notion of 'play space', which maintains a degree of poetic ambiguity in its definition. Döll's *mental* play space, a perspective that embraces transgression, is an ambient sensation, a subjective reading of the city. The strange seduction of playful ambiances lie in their foggy suggestion of direction. What rules are confronted in a potential play space? The flâneur projects his desires into an invitation from the unknown city, into a direction that deviates from a particular status quo. Again, we face the problem of reconciling the subjective aspects of 'mental play space' with the actual city, objects of design and prescription of function.

Döll applies Lefaivre's theoretical method in generating playground spaces within two redevelopment sites in Rotterdam, resulting in some unique playgrounds that mostly target youth.⁹ De Certeau writes: "To practice space is thus to repeat the joyful and silent experience of childhood."¹⁰ But what about the emergence of a playful culture in the underground city? What about

Figure 5.4
Depot.
Publicly undermining the
architecture of authority.



the differing nature of fun for the transgressive urbanist, who conjures *homo ludens* in acts of trespassing, in following a random stranger through the city? There exists a subtly shaded palette with which one may describe play space, further underground, bordering the dangerous and uncomfortable. Bataille's eroticism challenges a re-evaluation of pleasure and play, extending their terrain into spiritual engagement. Recalling the stubborn curiosity of a child, the transgressive urbanist traces ludic paths back and forth between the numbingly familiar and the seductively unknown.

Activities that uncover the waywardly sensual are identified in the following study of tabooed, illicit and sometimes illegal activities. Each case is a playful and creative exploration of latent eroticism in urban space. Taking different routes to reach the threshold, each perform a playfully transgressive act. The result is a conjured pleasure in otherwise overlooked or discarded layers of the city.

Vanishing Point

Michael Cook, founder of the website *vanishingpoint.ca* and an explorer of urban undergrounds since 2003, has unearthed stunning qualities in the infrastructure that sustains storm water management in Montreal and Toronto.¹¹ The impromptu lighting that achieves the colour exposure in the photos require the positioning of handheld lights, often included in the photo held by Cook himself. With Cook seen gripping flashlights and wearing draining getups, the series is a documentary of his own transgression into "secret waterways". The familiar city that drives him to descend into the earth is, for Cook, a series of preset patterns:

Stepping outside our prearranged traffic patterns and established destinations, we find a city laced with liminality, with borderlands cutting across its heart and reaching into its sky.¹²

Figure 5.5
At the end of the tunnel.
A mysterious body at the
vanishing point.

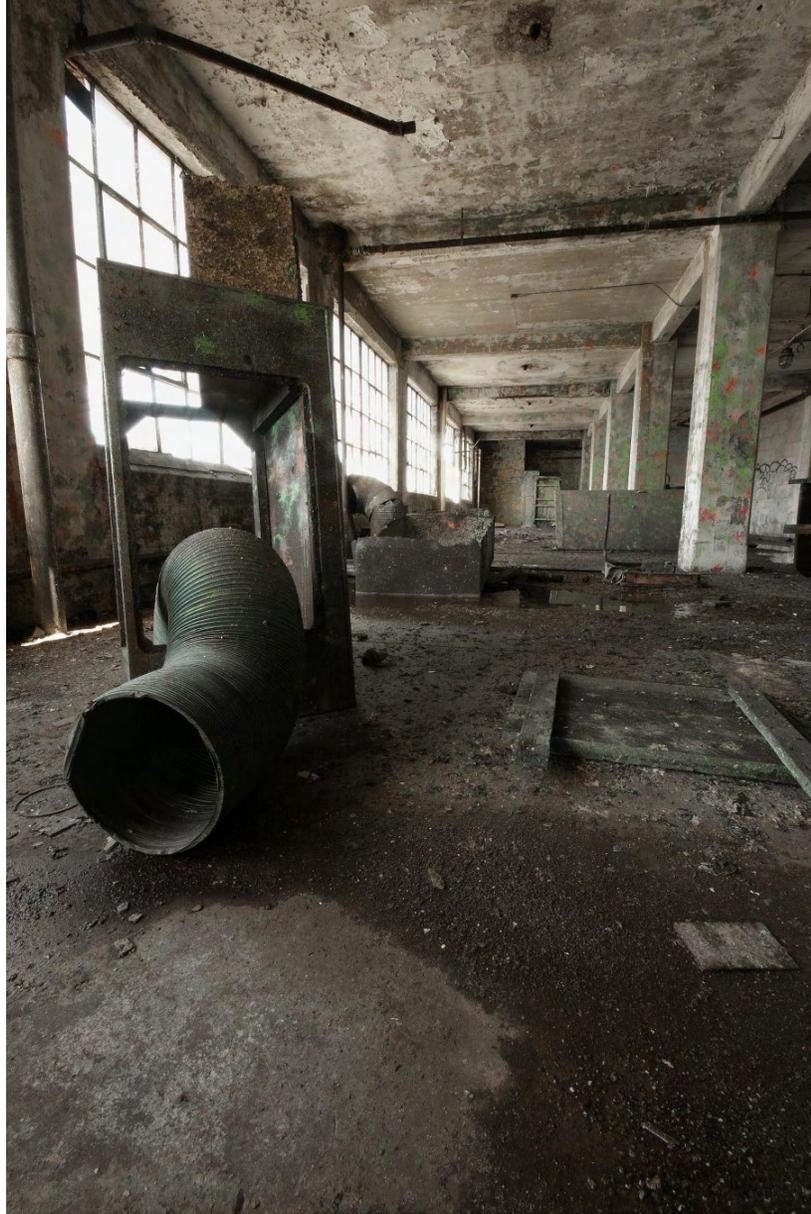


The city's liminality, its thresholds, exist in places beyond the establishment of our daily patterns, among internal organs where one may experience the heart of the city connecting to depths mirroring the sky. As an explorer of drains, Cook is accustomed to reading infrastructural maps, some of which are seen reproduced among his photos. Developing an understanding of the underworld through both the physical exploration and the study of schematics must impart an appreciation of the logic of the storm drain system as having its own pattern, however fragmented they may be. His words convey an equal but opposite relation between "prearranged traffic patterns" of the familiar city, and the "laced" distribution networks of the subterrain.¹³ Among the storm drains is a completely separate city, with its own internal and inverted sky. Cook's nether-city is made up of borderlands, uncertain districts. It is the unknown city.

Naked City Spleen

A pre-med student, and an aspiring surgeon interested in anatomy and dissection, Miru Kim moved to New York in 1999, where she fell in love with the city. Drawn to the "unseen layers" of the city organism, Kim decided instead to pursue an MFA and artistically explore the vast underworld of New York.¹⁴ Kim was soon confronted by a man while photographing rats in the New York subways who warned of the Metro Transit Authority's policies prohibiting photography in any part of its property. Kim's reaction: "Well, okay then. I'll follow the rats."¹⁵ Pushed by the potential threat of MTA response while on a subway platform, Kim crossed the common limits of the urban underground and began exploring abandoned tunnels. Rats served as the provocateurs to her transgression into a complete unknown, from the platforms that host an overlap of human and rat habitats. Kim's intentional immersion into mysterious and alienating environments led to her being coaxed into the frame as an imaginary creature, a native to mysterious biomes, like the rats that led her. In her photographs she acts out an animalistic posture shaped in correspondence to

Figure 5.6
Below a land of rains.
The naked city and its
native.



the surrounding neglected artifacts and, through haptic experience, gains an instinctive knowledge of both the surfaces of the coarse walls and of her naked body. Her search is for a state of restlessness, where even a perched position resembling sleep is uncomfortably ready for a defensive response.

Infiltration

Jeff Chapman, founder of the website *infiltration.org* and credited as one of the founders of the modern urban exploration movement, began compiling photographs and written accounts of expeditions exploring various private properties which in his case included ‘employees-only’ areas in occupied buildings.¹⁶ Compared to Cook and Kim, the stakes can be far lower in an act of infiltration. A slight dip into the unknown city is represented by a glance into an opened door, followed by a slight push forward. Chapman’s sensibility harvests pleasure from the slightest transgression, maintaining that there is a forbidden element. Infiltration’s motto is simply to “go places you’re not supposed to go.”¹⁷ The motto is directed to an individual, the ‘you’, whose targeted unknown is completely subjective, of interest to that particular individual. In this way, while related to Cook’s and Kim’s expeditions, Infiltration uncovers the shadows of individual psychogeographies, through subjective transgression. To ‘infiltrate’ is to gradually and surreptitiously occupy, to pass through a series of ambient filters, cultivating small pleasures from each erotic strata, continuously provoked further into the unknown. What drives the infiltrator past the first filter? Chapman answers questions over the phone for the radio show *This American Life*:

Ira Glass: Once you “lower yourself in and enjoy”, what does it mean to “enjoy” that room?

Jeff Chapman: Well, to savour it. You take the pictures, proving your conquest. You get to understand what was behind all those sounds that you heard from the other side of the door.¹⁸

Figure 5.7
Found space.
An abandoned structure
felt as parallax filters,
drawing an intruder
further.



Infiltration isn't only concerned with the anatomy of cities, but with any of their private or prohibited sectors. Chapman transgresses without requiring a surgical entry through the skin to reach the heart and bowels of the city, but by opening its unlocked private doors and savouring. He keeps from entering the anatomical layers of the city, and instead strips it of filters concealing its private areas. The resulting documents resemble architectural pornography, the consumption of which fuels fantasies of vicarious experience for website visitors.

Following Piece

Figure 5.8
Choosing a leader.
Drifting through the
unknown agenda of an
other.

In October 1969, Vito Acconci performed a daily act of following for a full month. This game added a layer of illicitness and novelty to a familiar environment. This form of transgression does not result precisely in a 'rush', as there is no adrenal response to this anti-social act. Following isn't a chase. The chaser is drunk on adrenaline, scared, angry, panicked. The follower, conversely is suave, subtly agile and calculating. He requires the ability to be someone else at the moment of being accosted, lying to deflect suspicion. From the moment the target is selected, each step that follows is a deviation. In 'Following Piece', Acconci becomes a pseudo-citizen, a flâneur. One day's notes on a followed subject:

Oct 9

10:21AM, 23rd St & 6th Ave, NW corner: Woman in gray coat -- she walks E on 23rd St.

10:26AM: she enters park, 23rd St & 5th Ave, and sits down on bench.

11:14AM: she walks to BMT subway station, 23rd St & 5th Ave, uptown side.

11:23AM: she boards RR train to Queens.

11:54AM: she gets off train at 30th Ave., and walks W on 30th St.

12:07PM: she enters house, 23-01 30th Ave.¹⁹

Figure 5.9
Followed.
A woman chosen
by chance, followed
through the under-
ground city.

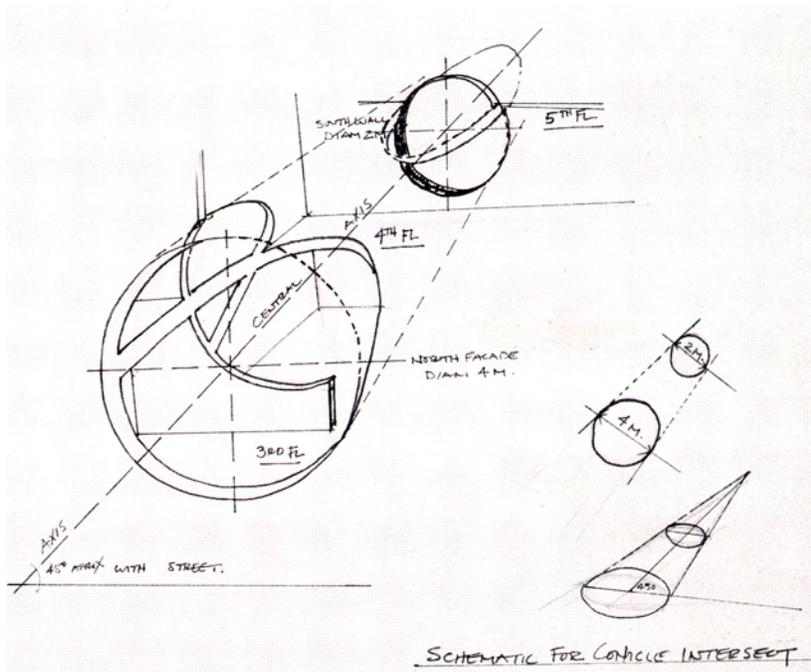


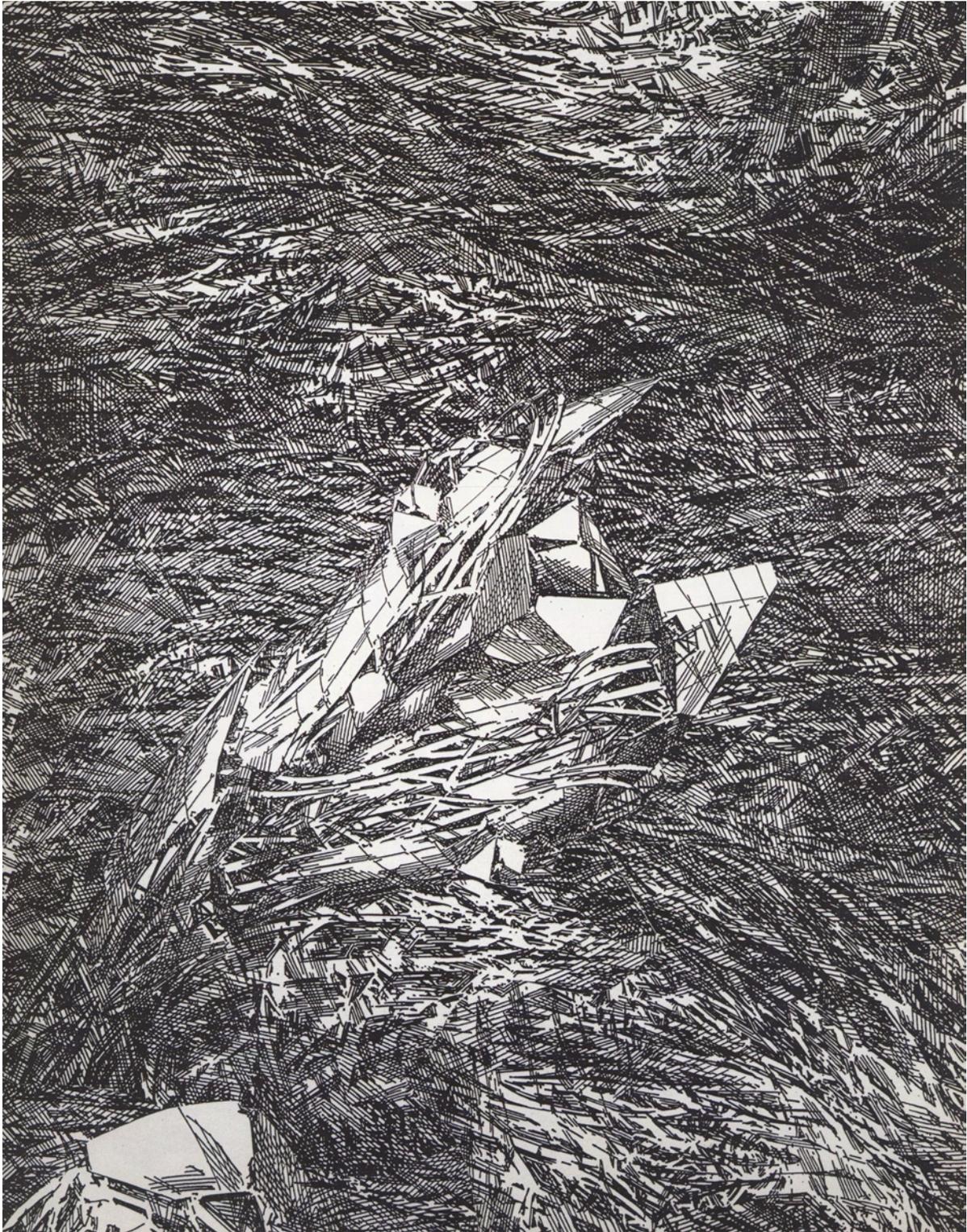
Figure 5.10
Cutting.
The conical void
becomes a container
of vertigines, a middle-
zone between inhabita-
tion and demolition.

While remaining in the public sphere, Acconci penetrates the private daily practice of strangers. Differentiated fundamentally from the practice of the *dérive*, to follow someone requires an opposite focus: follow only the object. This practice necessitates a deferral of subjective will, as if attached by an invisible rope. Transgression occurs in this case through a threshold of social behaviour, performing an untraceable highjacking of someone's daily practice. Like Jeff Chapman's practice described in the next paragraph, this is a form of subjective deviation that transforms the follower's spatial perception as he transgresses normal social behaviour in a manner only appreciable to himself; he leaves no apparent trace.

Conical Intersect

In 1975 Gordon Matta-Clark created a site specific work for the Paris Biennale in *Les Halles*, district and pivot-point in many Situationist drifts. The work, titled 'Conical Intersect', involved cutting the walls and floors at lines of intersection between an angled conical void, and a building set for demolition, making way for the Pompidou Center. Matta-Clark had the help of a small crew to painstakingly saw through heavy masonry structure, following the elliptical intersection paths of the cone and the orthogonal frame of the building. The phallic form of the cone inserted into a decrepit pair of townhouses, days before their final destruction, is a perverse violation of architecture. Documented thoroughly with film and photographs, the exhausting physical process resulted in a surreal juxtaposition. Using the emptied and discarded building in a powerfully sculptural way, a new spatial experience is explored in both the void, and the fragments of remaining, violently altered building interior. Matta-Clark saw the city as multiplex, brimming with these kinds of possibilities.

Figure 5.11
Cut planning.
Matta-Clark's method of
scoring the intersection
cuts.



What we understand as building or see as the urban landscape is just this sort of middle zone... that given ingredient which is somewhat useful and obedient, but is really just the beginning of speculations about what could be beyond it and what numbers of directions there could be.²⁰

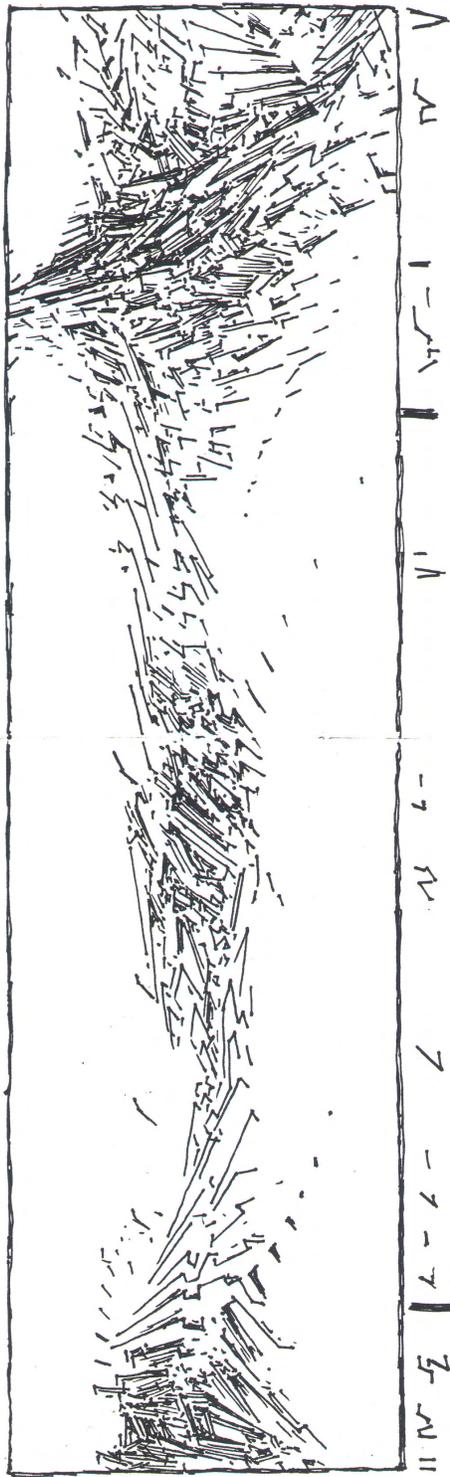
The middle zone is the everyday, the familiar. It is obedient in as much as its users maintain its familiar functionality. Matta-Clark however, considers it an ingredient, a reactant in a volatile mixture. His operation consisted of rough-edged cuts, followed by a removal of the constructed building, in turn revealing a horrific reality of heights, massive stacked masonry and chaotic interiors of walls and floors—a reality that architecture conceals so well. The roughness of it all, due to a tight timeline, forced an urgency upon its creation that renders disastrous qualities. Simultaneously one imagines a *tracneur's* path through the 'Conical Intersect,' floor to floor, balancing on the sawn edges of walls and claiming the site as a Parkour park.

Free Space

Lebbeus Woods, who along with Matta-Clark associated their work with the portmanteau 'Anarchitecture', has created a wealth of work as an activist for radical architectural imagination. His speculations on alternative approaches to designing cities stem from imagining 'heterarchical' political structures, where the individual holds the power to momentarily transform the manner of occupying space, undermining systems of power. A creative experience abounds within Anarchitecture because

You have to figure out how to be in these spaces, you have to invent. I call these free spaces. Free in the sense that they are free of meaning, free of purpose, and certainly free of comfort.²¹

Figure 5.12
Turbulence.
Architecture without
constraints, free to can-
nibalize.

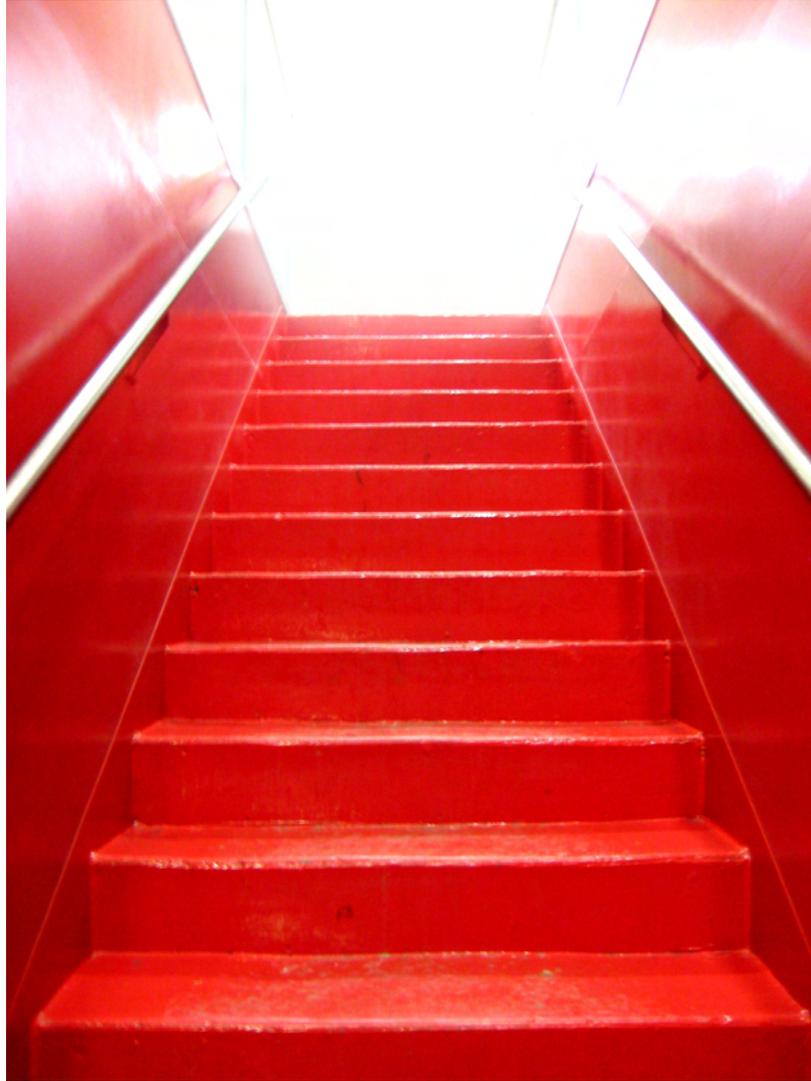


Woods imagines creating a sense of freedom manifested in the appropriation of space, but also a freeing of the space itself from the constraints of functional intent. Bernard Tschumi writes that “architecture wonders if it can exist without having to find its meaning or its justification in some purposeful exterior need.”²² Tschumi sees this as a paradox, but central to the search for architectural autonomy. Woods’ ‘Turbulence’ drawings are a visualization of this dream. They are snapshots of flowing tectonic oceans, “neglected architecture, insisting that its own beauty is deeper yet.”²³

Discoveries by the aforementioned urbanists rupture familiar spaces and conduct. These practices transform complacent ambiances of non-opportunity: Cook and Kim in their determination to transgress everyday thresholds and seek out mysterious netherworlds; Chapman and Acconci in identifying transgression latent in everyday situations; Matta-Clark and Woods for exposing conventional space to violence. The ambient city of ‘felt places’, which eludes the anaesthetic city, is discovered repeatedly by transgressive urbanists. In addition to engaging physicality and sensuality, the allure of such places are in their being prohibited, secretive or taboo. Our luminaries exceed these thresholds each in their own way, and transform the habitual relationships and perceptions of the familiar city. They transgress conventional social behaviour and delight in the excess that abounds. Eroticism is here conjured from both the sensual richness and the psychological gravity of crossing a prohibited threshold.

Once engaged, the flâneur remains erotically charged, peddling the experience of ‘felt places’ back out into the city. Ruptures around the anesthetic city leak into adjacent places, carried out from the unseen, resonating with the potential of familiar everyday environments.

Figure 5.13
Sequence of becoming.
Echoes of breaks
peddled in between.

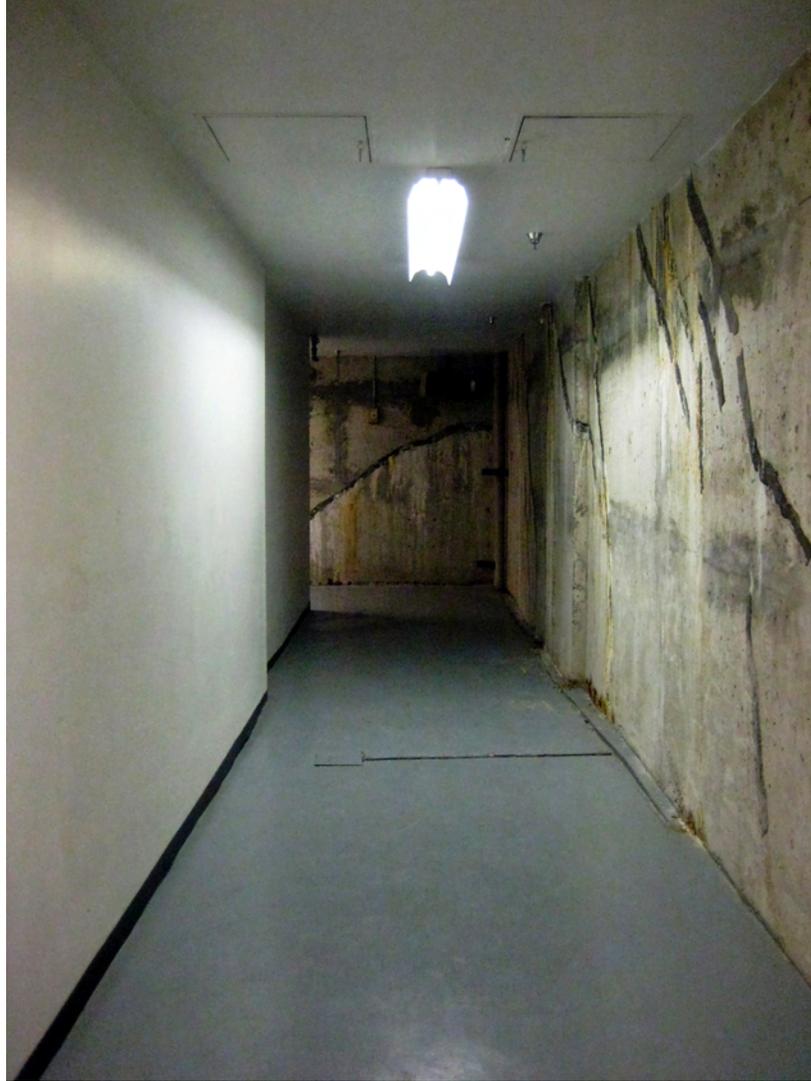


Infiltrating the Mega-Interior

The following pages (figs. 5.14-5.26) present a collection of photographs, accompanied by short anecdotes recalling moments during my investigation of the back corridors of the underground city. While the oppressive aesthetic of the service corridors is initially apparent, the experience of intruding upon them charged each moment with a heightened sensitivity to sounds, details, and encounters.

This documentation was studied for months afterwards as I struggled with the problem of designing a place for intrusion. This is ofcourse a paradoxical idea, as any intent to invite infiltration misses the point of the practice. The insight gathered from these experiences led me to devote attention to the notion of hyper-sensuality and eroticism. However small, defensive bodily reactions to forms of trespassing accentuate the senses, amplifying sounds, the motion of air, the coarseness and unevenness of surfaces. These, the most erotic spaces in the malls, are reserved for janitors.

Figure 5.14
Resurfacing.



Entering the unlocked swinging double doors of the basement shopping level in Place Montreal Trust, I adopted a disguising posture and pace of walking in order to walk past building maintenance workers without suspicion. Each unknown Figure that passed by added a layer of playful waywardness and intensified the senses with urgency. Laid out with distinct lack of priority, residual service corridors end up cranked with corners, resulting in stretches of space where I am invisible, and approaching strangers warn me with the sound of their steps bouncing off of walls and around corners. At the moment, only the hum and drag of air ducts linger. In this corridor, an ambiance has formed. It's character is contradictory: exclusive, energetic, active, and yet banal, ordinary, and still. One side of this corridor is painted drywall, the other is unfinished poured concrete from floor to ceiling, the most richly weathered surface in the entire building. Resistant to easy cleaning and outside the public eye, the wall retains the markings of graffiti, scrapes from wheeled garbage bins, and curious splatters of red paint or ketchup on the walls. The dark red markings were dabbed and spread along the concrete wall, false traces of flesh mutilation, deposited along the cracks of a failing foundation wall in the service corridors. I soon developed a strong connection to this place, thrilled by images of violent crimes.

Figure 5.15
Perimeter corridor.



Figure 5.16
Foundation wall 1.



Figure 5.17
Foundation wall 2.

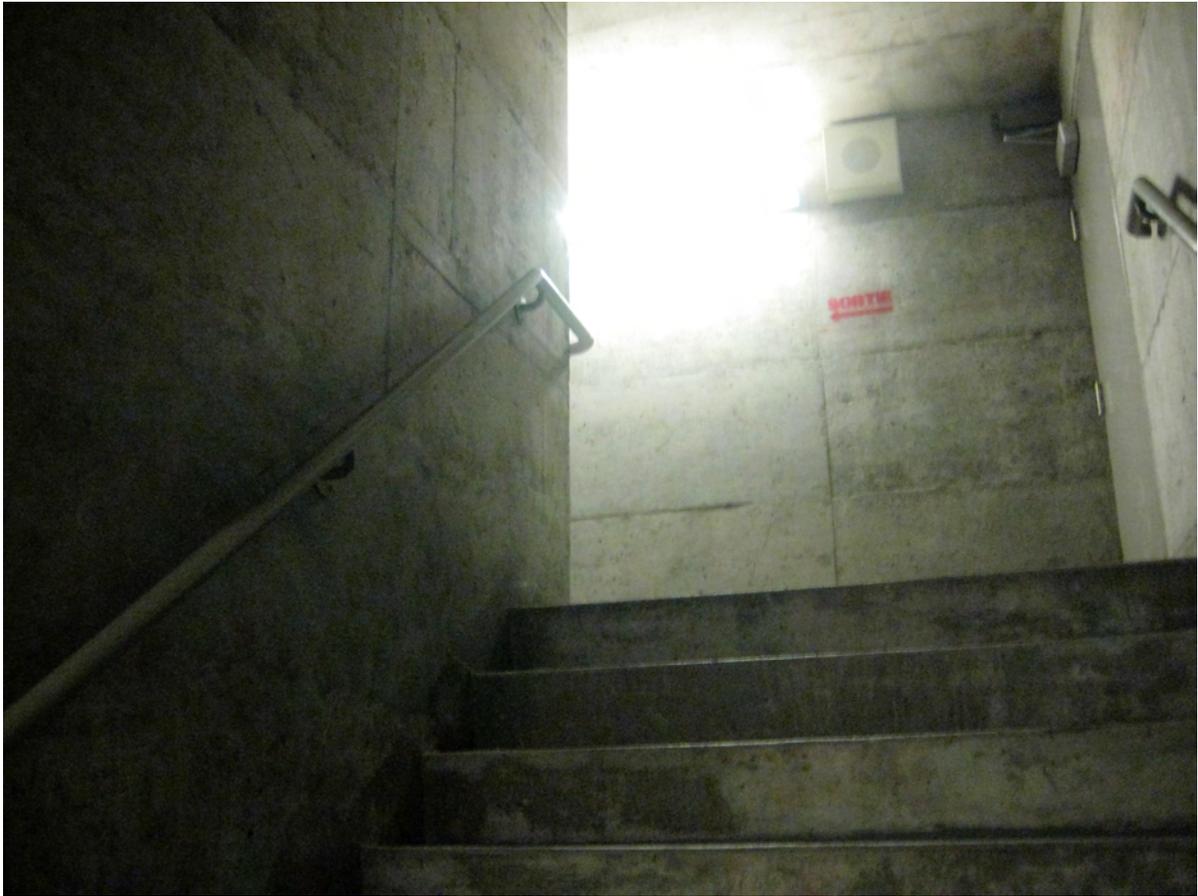


Figure 5.18
Exiting the perimeter corridor 1.



Figure 5.19
Exiting the perimeter corridor 2.



One of the corridors in the basement shopping level of the Complexe Des-jardins dead-ends with a locked door. I began back-tracking, and noticed a service entrance towards one of the building's freight elevators. The doors were unlocked, I entered, and in these spaces—the longest and most circuitous service corridors that I had encountered in the underground city—I passed not a single other person. The corridors were littered with wooden skids and palettes, with occasional stretches of burnt out lighting. Up a stairwell and through the first unlocked door is a corridor more tightly dimensioned than one would expect. There was about an inch between the top of my head and the ceiling. If someone were to approach from the opposite direction, the narrow proportions would make us have to sidestep past one another. I stood at one of the hallway's turns, and listened for activity, waited for any sign of another person in this building sector. My acoustic voyeurism caught sound of a body in motion, pushing a cart on the floor above me. I tracked the cart for a moment, until the corridor layouts deviated.

Figure 5.20
Within Le Complexe 1.



Figure 5.21
Within Le Complexe 2.



Figure 5.22
Within Le Complexe 3.



Figure 5.23
Within Le Complexe 4.



Figure 5.24
Within Le Complexe 5.

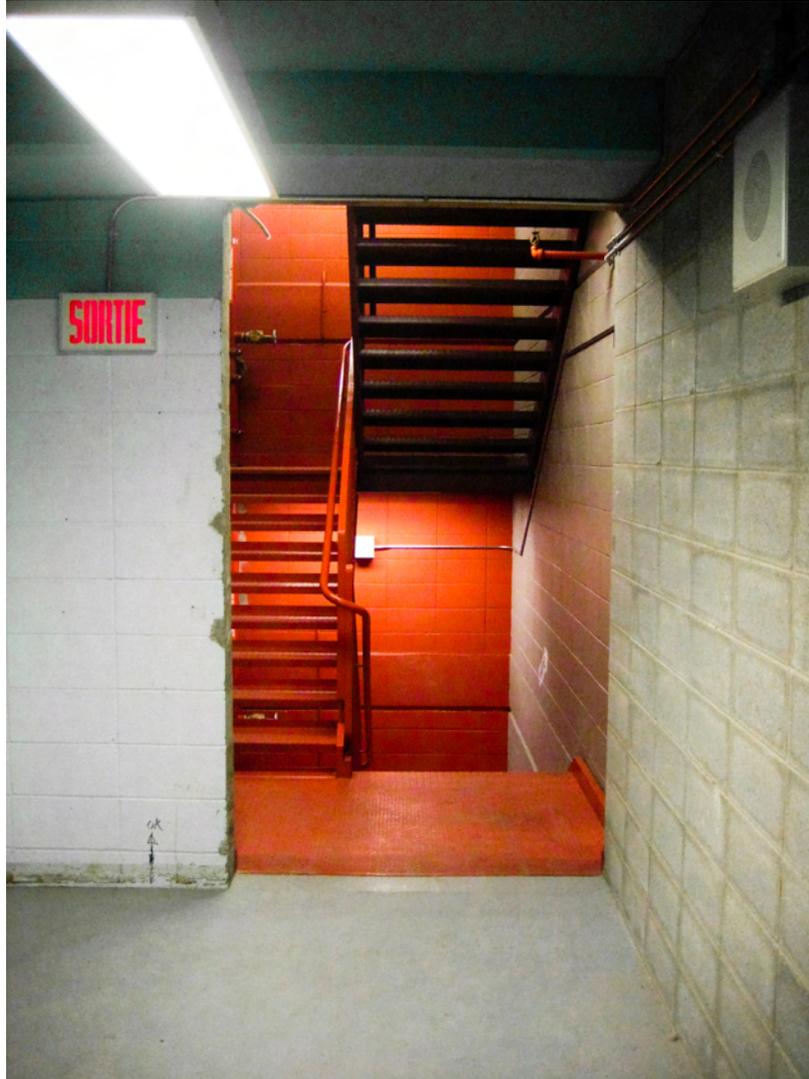


Figure 5.25
Exiting Le Complexe 1.

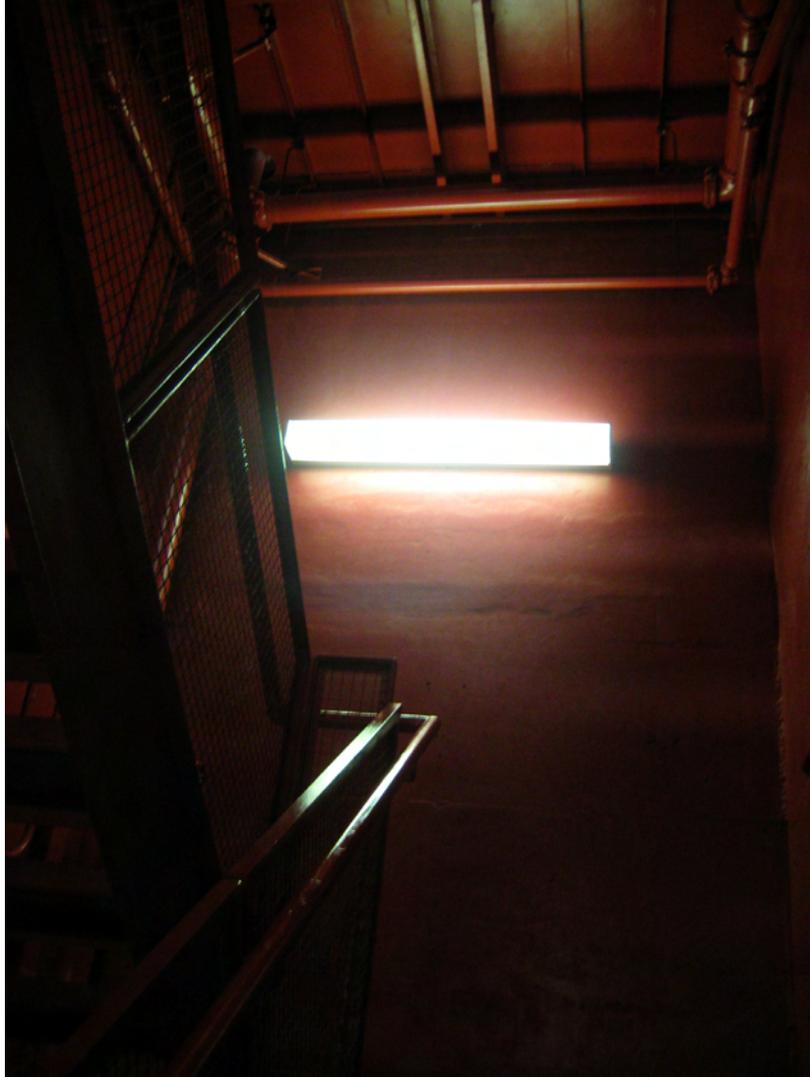


Figure 5.26
Exiting Le Complexe 2.

Endnotes

1. "wayward". (Retrieved Oct 28, 2009). Online Dictionary.
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/wayward>
2. Baudelaire (2004, 92)
3. Bataille (1962, 67)
4. *ibid*: (1962, 16-17)
5. Tschumi (1994, 78)
6. *ibid*.
7. Lefaivre (2007, 36)
8. *ibid*: (2007, 28)
9. *ibid*: (2007, 86)
10. De Certeau (1984, 110)
11. "About the Vanishing Point." <http://vanishingpoint.ca/>
12. *ibid*.
13. *ibid*.
14. "Miro Kim's Underground Art." http://www.ted.com/talks/miru_kim_s_underground_art.html
15. *ibid*.
16. Chapman (2005, 5)
17. *ibid*: (2005, 223)
18. "This American Life #141: Invisible Worlds". NPR. 10-01-1999
19. "Designboom." <http://www.designboom.com/eng/interview/acconci.html>
20. Diserens (2003, 84)
21. "Experimental Space and Architecture." <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYZiQ4KL3ml>
22. Tschumi (1994, 34)
23. Woods (1992, 40)

6

The Synesthetic City

“Zora has the quality of remaining in your memory point by point, in its succession of streets, of houses along the streets, and of doors and windows in the houses, though nothing in them possesses a special beauty or rarity. Zora’s secret lies in the way your gaze runs over patterns following one another as in a musical score where not a note can be altered or displaced.”¹

-Italo Calvino

“The boundary belongs to the phenomenon and not to the formal surface, and the phenomena that shape our perception of our surroundings operate by rules that have no grounding in our normative modes of spatial representation.”²

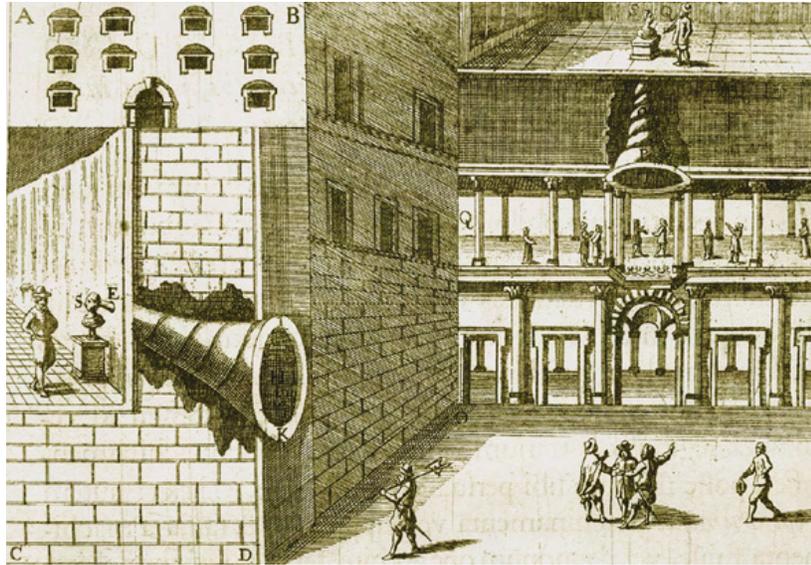
-Michelle Addington

Sonic Detritus

Michel de Certeau, ascending to the summit of the World Trade Center, describes his transfiguration into “a solar eye, looking down like a god.”³ Inversely, the underground’s enclosures and interiority do not possess the epic vistas and vantage points found on the grid-like city ground. The underground is the realm of the haptic and the sonic, a *pan-acousticon*. Contrasting Murray Schafer’s position on the negative effects of city noise, urban soundscapes are treated herein as provocateurs to transgress, explore, and play—like the rats encountered by Miru Kim in the subways of New York. The urban soundscape is a 360° spectrum of energy, bouncing around corners and through filters, the product of friction between physical matter.

Schafer’s *Tuning of the World* introduced the term ‘schizophonia’, defined as a divide between sounds and their source, the proliferation of which, he argues, evokes a profound anxiety. Schafer describes soundscapes in modern cities as jarring, and

Figure 6.1
June 1st 2009
walk recording.



asserts a need for quietude.⁴ These jarring urban soundscapes are however, to those like John Cage, the source of new forms of musical expression.

Wherever we are, what we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating. The sound of a truck at fifty miles per hour. Static between the stations. Rain. We want to capture and control these sounds, to use them not as sound effects but as musical instruments.⁵

Cage imagines how art can be created from the sonic detritus of the city, generating new musical experiences by juxtaposing soundscapes. The musician in this case places high value on the sonic details of his environment, rejecting quietude in search of new life, excitement from otherwise overlooked layers of experience. Absolute quietude is in fact never truly experienced, as Cage found in 1951 after visiting an anechoic chamber designed to absorb all sound vibrations. Amongst the most silent environment that acoustic science could produce, Cage still heard two sounds which were later identified as his nervous system in operation, and his blood in circulation.⁶ Life itself produces perceivable noise within the human body. This idea corresponds with film-maker John Cassavettes' words spoken during an interview from his convertible in Los Angeles: "Silence is death."⁷

We are back in acoustic space. We have begun again to structure the primordial feeling, the tribal emotions (from which a few centuries of literacy divorced us) of a culture that preceded the invention of writing and printing.⁸

Marshall McLuhan posits that with a return to oral media, from a culture of visual and literate media, there is a consequent return to ancient emotion, and to experiencing life in sensual simultaneity. A return to "acoustic space" reconditions the non-visual senses to perform in synesthetic continuity.

Figure 6.2
Acoustic telescopes.

Figure 6.3
Underground Krakau.



Crossing Over

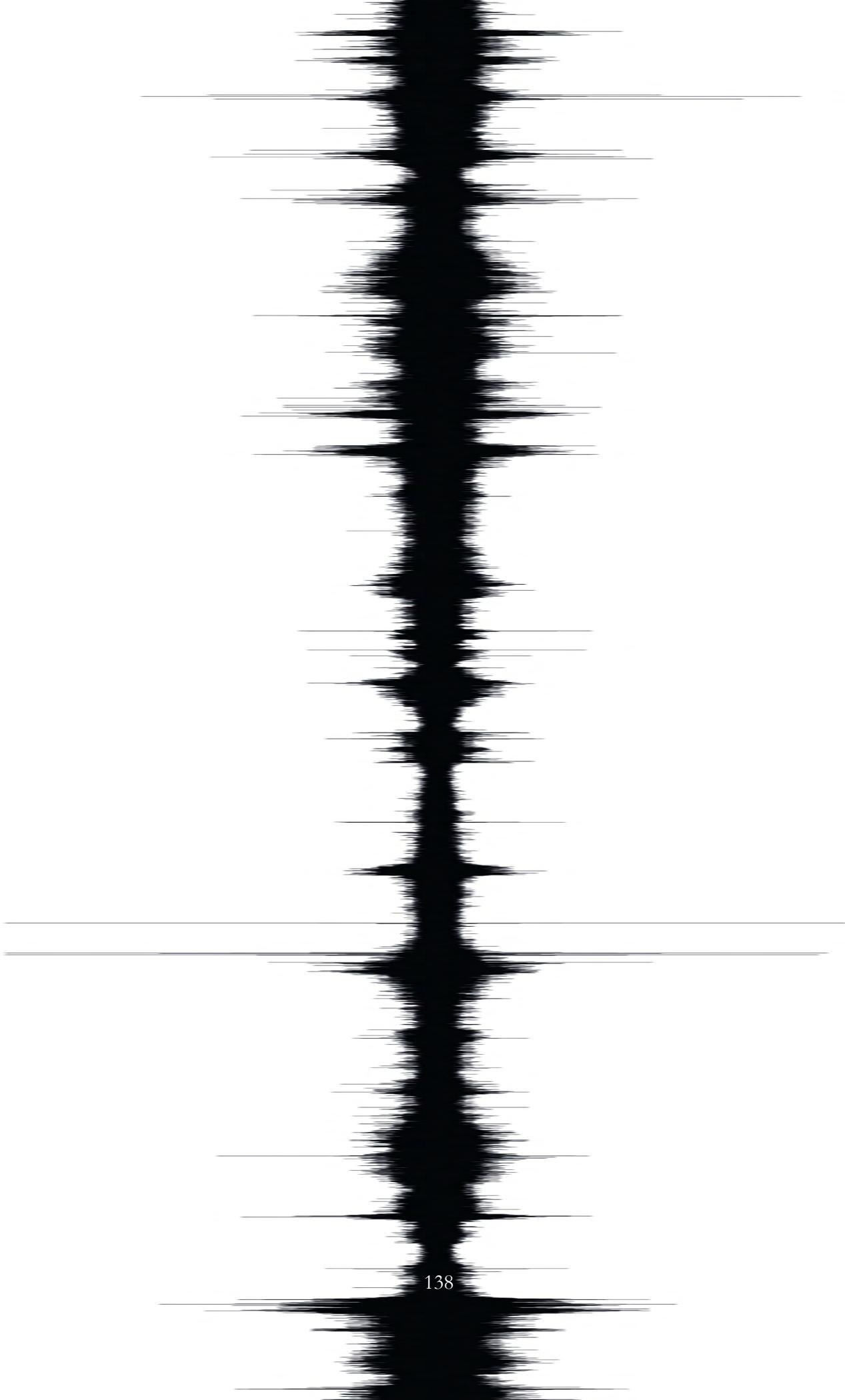
Synesthesia can be described as a sensual experience triggering a response from a different sense organ, for example: a musical phrase conjuring a chromatic gradient in the mind's eye. These sensual *détournements* are experienced by the new explorers of the proposed underground interventions. Sounds from the street merging with musical performances in the underground, aligning in accidental rhythms; weather penetrating the interior corridors, forming icicles on interior bulkheads; temperature gradients forming thermal sequences along the Bonaventure pedestrian tunnel, air pressure escaping from the subway tunnels and plunging into service spaces, submerged headlights on the Autoroute Ville-Marie flickering into building lobbies. Synesthesia and transgression are both uncanny sorts of 'crossing over'. The former achieves a continuity in the bodily senses, while the latter exceeds limits set by some established power, increasing the realm of connection, and the possibilities of spatial experience.

Figure 6.4
Splitting.
And merging.

The Synesthetic city is envisioned as transgressing the established direction of Montreal's underground development with an infusion of cuts and cacophony. Amongst the underground city, an interior network wrought with ill attempts to orient, the Synesthetic city may *disorient* people with a 'schizophonic' montage of sounds, mined from the city above, from the trains, and traffic. It is a design approach initiating qualities that provoke play and challenge exploration, asking the underground city's spaces to live up to all that its image invokes. Drawing from the mischievous experience inherent in the descent *underground*, and in line with Montreal's architectural experimentation and cultural energy, this proposal envisions a string of spaces that forge connections between buried infrastructures, streets and pedestrian tunnels. Functionally ambiguous, these interventions aim to restore the commuters imaginative and sensual capacities.

Figure 6.5
The third man.
A concealed
clandestine act.

The *void* is herein considered a container of the catalyst for sonic vibrations, and for haptic sensations such as changes in temperature, the movement and qualities of air. The spaces



in between the physical forms of architecture are the hosts to so much environmental behaviour. Stated simply, “space is whatever form is not.”⁹ The shifting activities in these spaces are what Sean Lally and Jessica Young call *Softspace*. Their work investigates the visualization of spatial qualities that affect perception and experience over time.

Orthographic projection produces the objectified surface - fixed in Cartesian space and endlessly reproducible. What cannot be easily reproduced is the perception or experience of the environment that is always transient, always unique.¹⁰

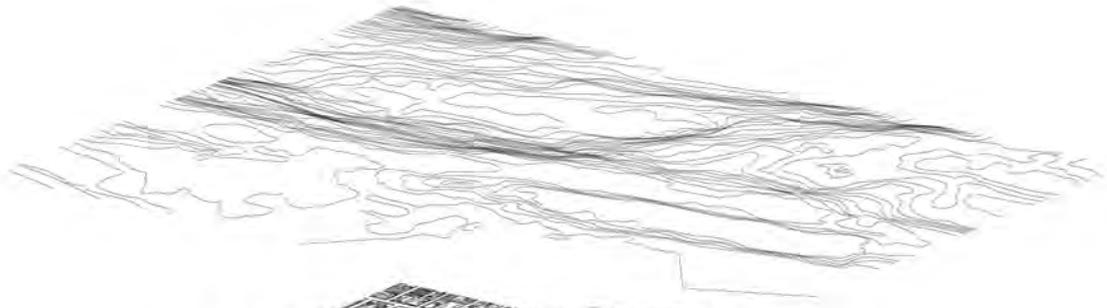
Traditional architectural plans, elevations, and sections, referred to by Michelle Addington as orthographic projection, privilege the surface itself over the subtle environmental factors that influence perception, experience, and emotion. The life of the place, the individual’s perception of it, the *situation*, the *moment*, the *rotten point*, are among these irreproducible phenomena. The transience of subjective perception has been a subject of focus throughout this thesis, whether the indeterminism of moments in a *dérive*, or the foggy geography of perceived ambiances. This design project is presented through a hybrid style of drawing that refers to the case studies and research presented throughout this book. The Synesthetic city is an initiation of a design process, intentionally left open as a platform for further development.

Scoring and the Underground

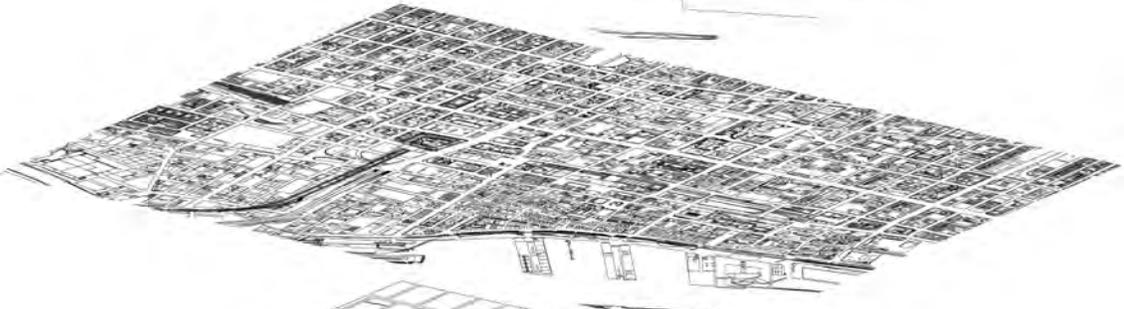
Figure 6.6
Sound wave.
Reflecting on footsteps,
and wind contacting the
microphone.

The 45 minute walk from McGill station, down to Place Bonaventure, the Palais de Congres, and back up to Place Des Arts station is transcribed in the following pages into linear diagrams. The meandering path through the city is broken and contorted into a straight line to reveal rhythms, like Italo Calvino’s ‘Zora’, whose “secret lies in the way your gaze runs over patterns following one another as in a musical score.”¹¹ Among the rhythms, there emerge areas of overlap between the subterranean infra-

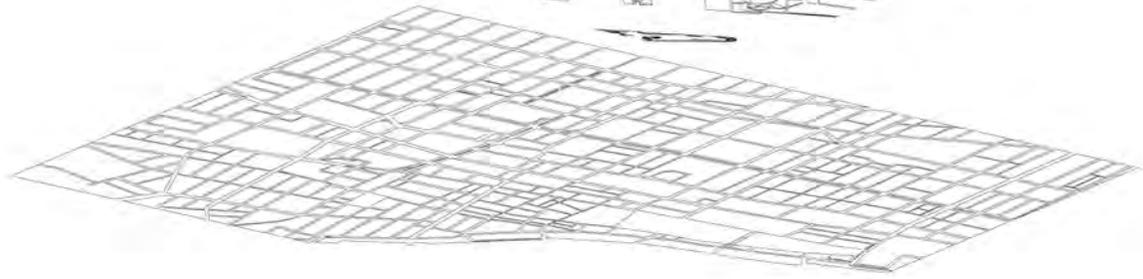
Topography



Properties



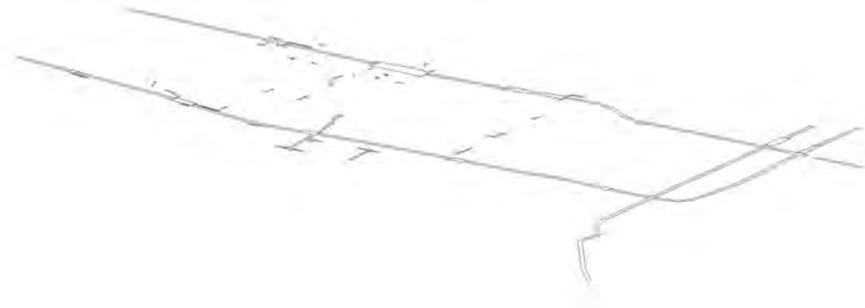
Streets



Interior network



Subways



Autoroute



structure and the pedestrian tunnels, identified as zones of intensity. (figs. 6.10, 6.11) These sites harbour opportunities to make connections between the overlapping areas, producing combinative experiences. This potential fusion is envisioned as a platform for synesthesia, and for provoking the commuters of the underground city to see beyond its glossy surfaces.

The following pages draw from the material discussed throughout this book and initiate a process of design intervention. Their purpose is in communicating an intention to evoke the experiential qualities championed throughout this work. This design proposal gleans fragments from the thesis text and images to conjure an overall impression of these spaces' potential. The drawings are guides, scores that suggest a number of possible futures, visualizing sensual experience with abstractions. While any architectural drawing can be considered a score, the following scores forego a significant degree of control and determinism compared to conventional orthographic projections, and emphasize the combinative.

Figure 6.7
Urban layers.
Potential qualities of
convergence.



Figure 6.8
Folding.
Time contorted
into a loop.

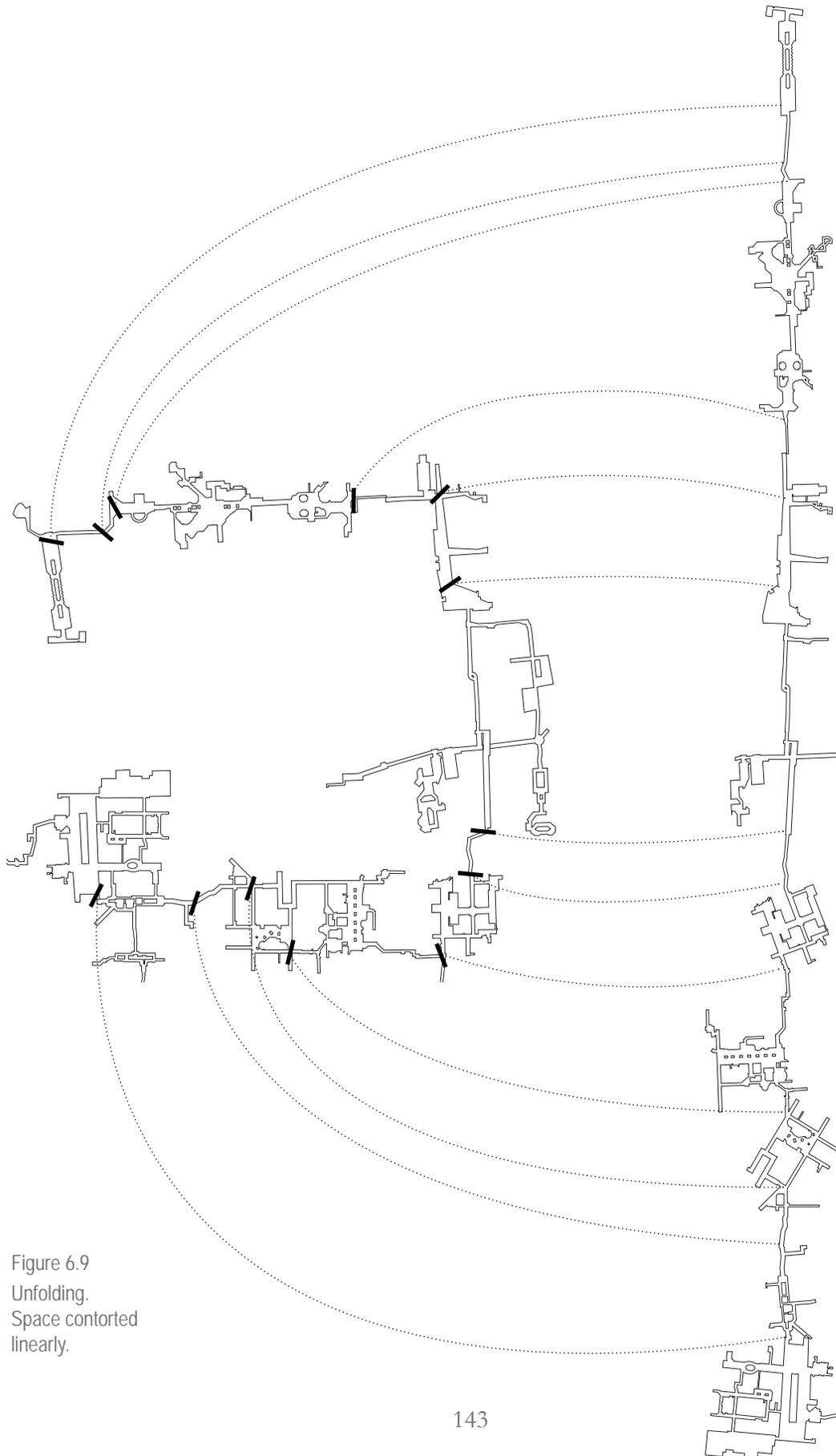
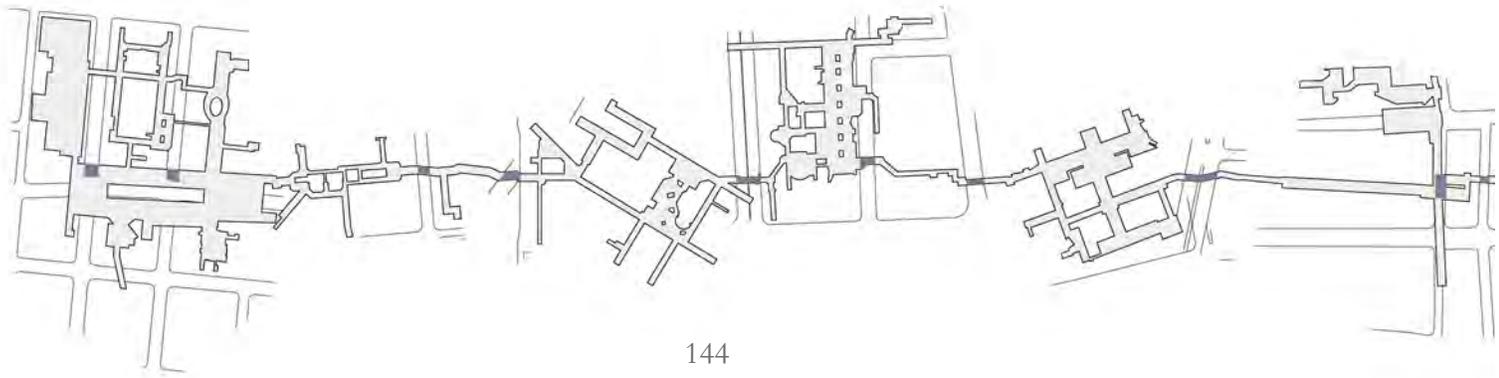
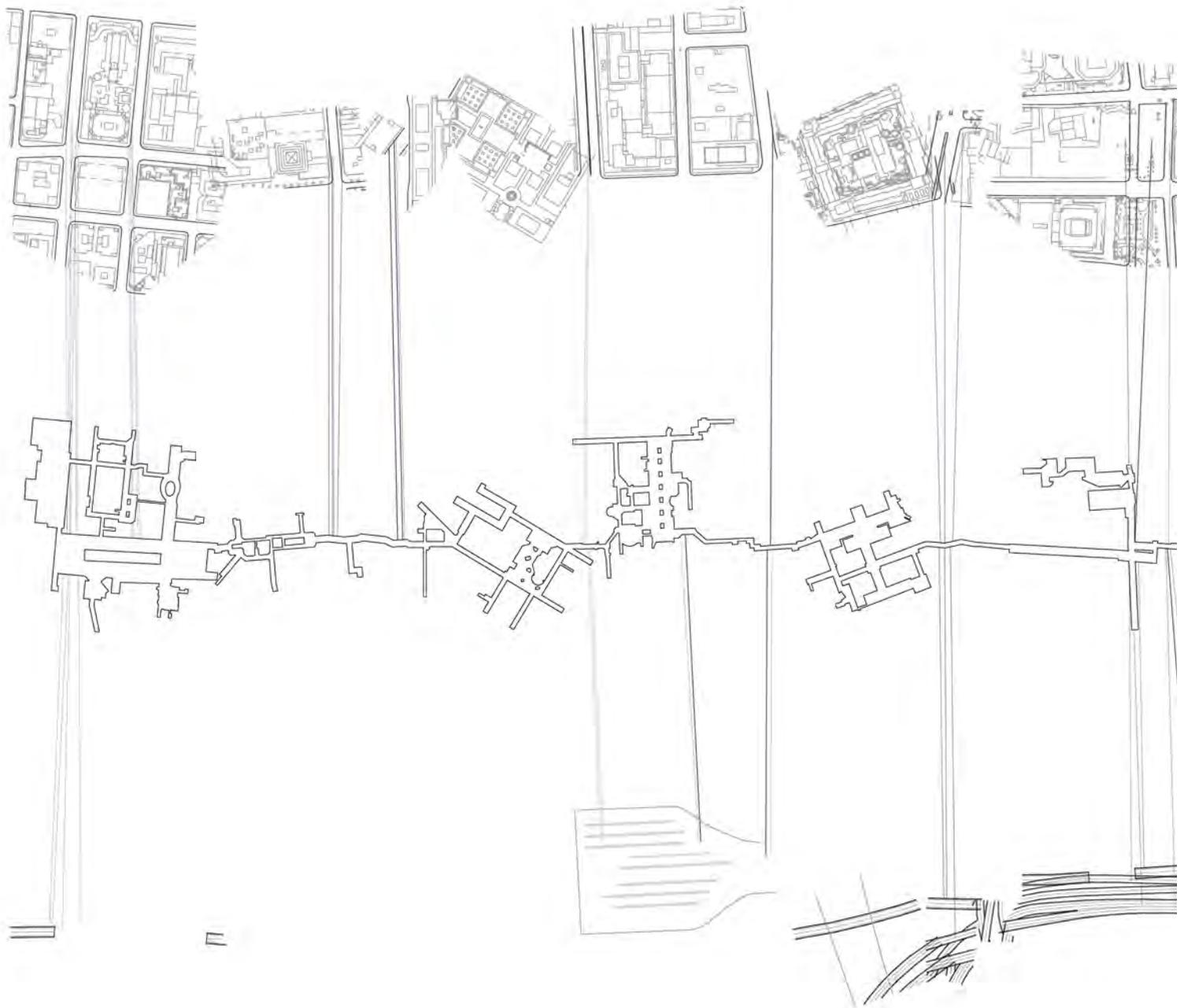
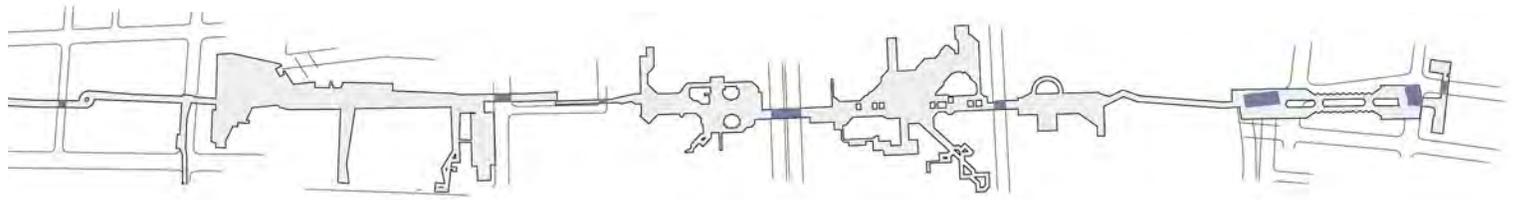
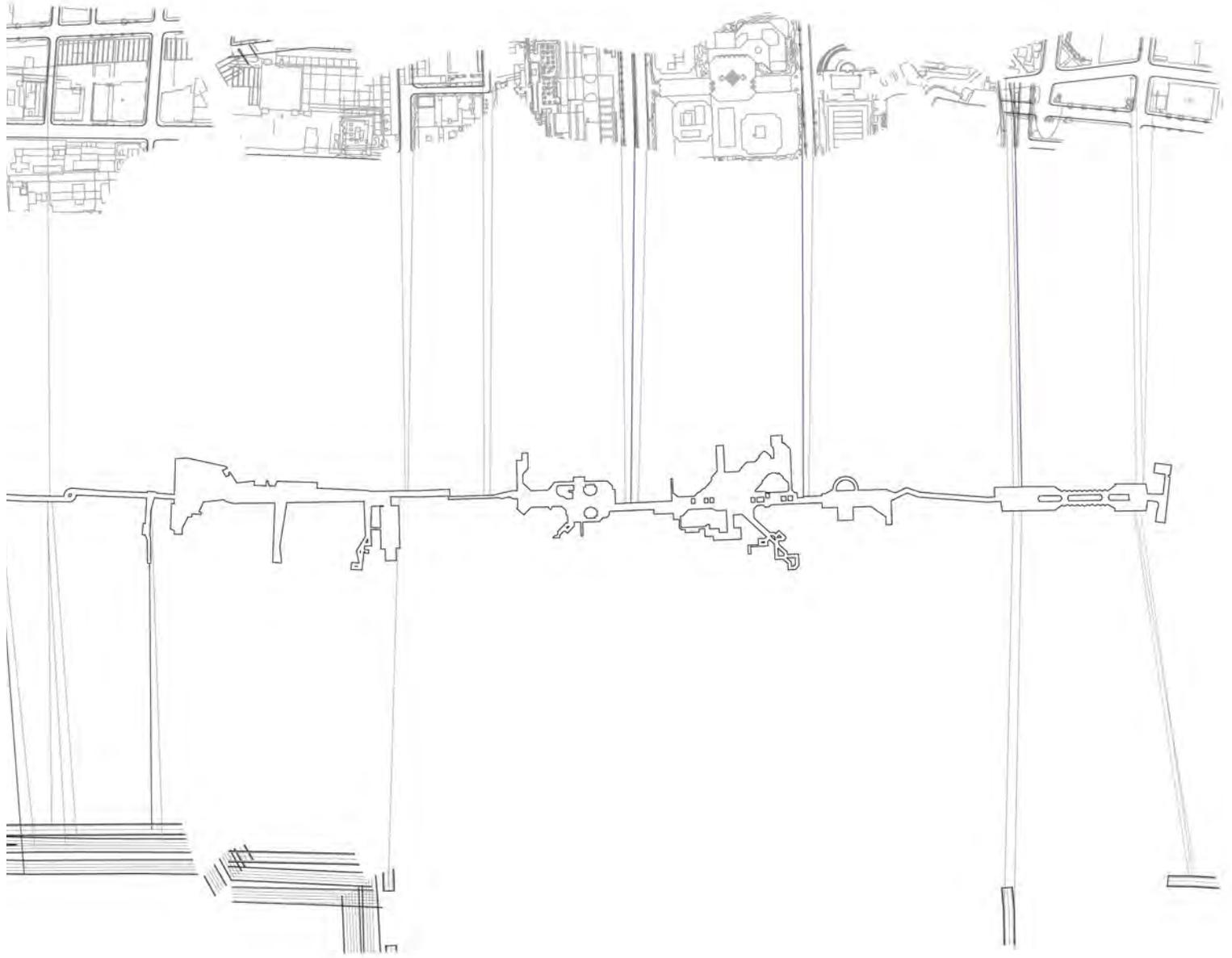
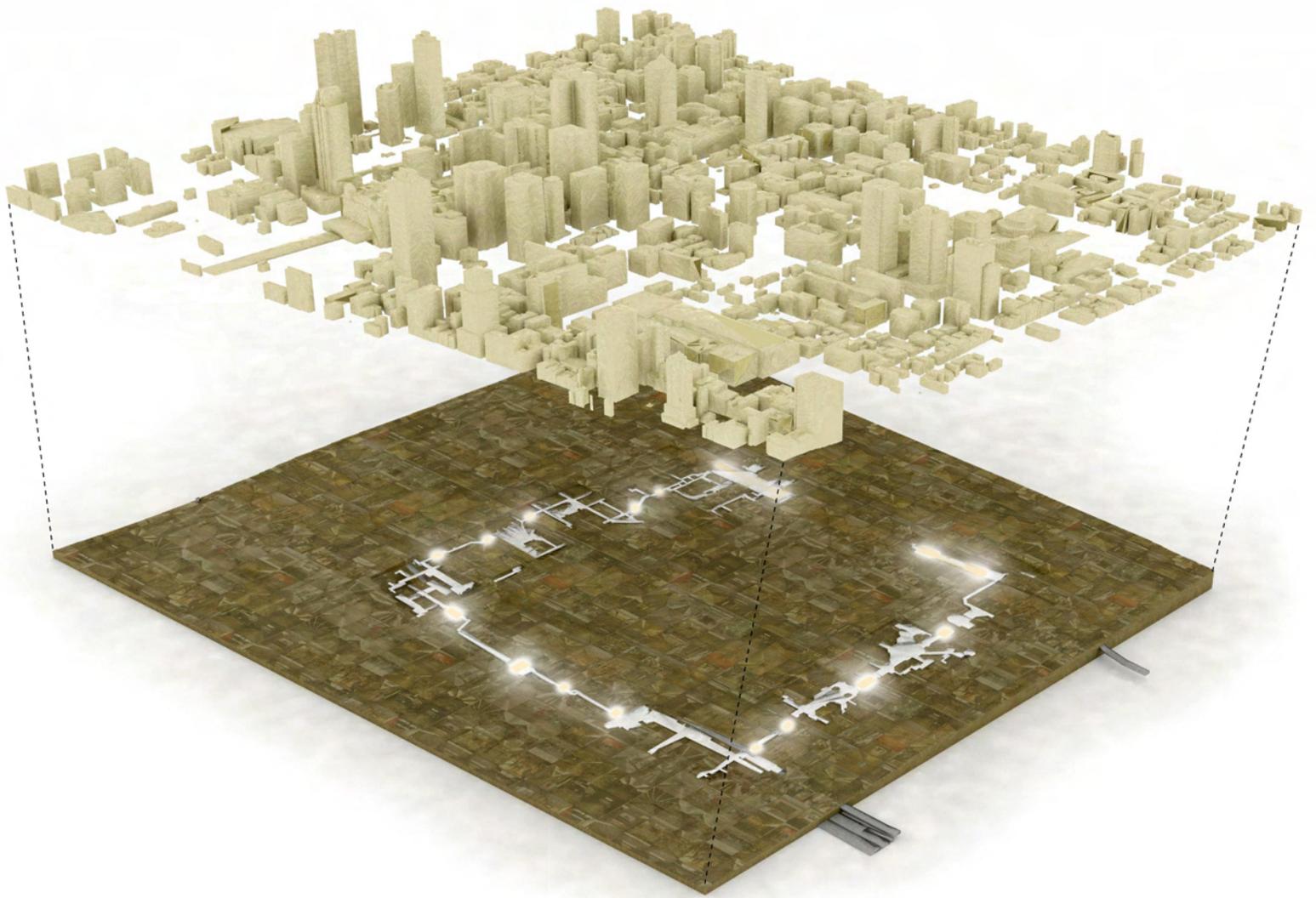


Figure 6.9
Unfolding.
Space contorted
linearly.



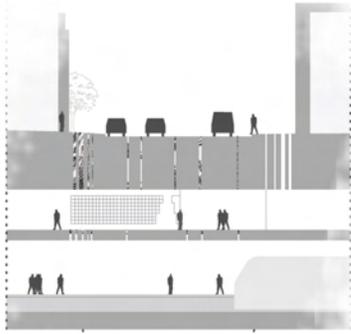




A re-sensualization of the downtown core through the insertion of voids, openings through the earth, foundations, and infrastructure, introducing violence, cutting into the private sector, undermining private ownership, transgressing the line dividing the pseudo-public and the unknown private interior, puncturing shields, breaking through surfaces, grafting to new continuities, reveling in the erotic space in between, energized by pleasure, turbulence, synesthetic, anarchic, facilitating cruising, engaging with boundaries prohibited due to social pressure, physical danger, private ownership, that approach thresholds of discomfort, infiltrating the forbidden edge, practicing trespassage, acoustic voyeurism, intrusion, the pleasure of tracking a stranger,

Figure 6.10 (pages 144-145)
Sites of convergence.

Figure 6.11
Re-folded.
The spreading of spatial
conditions through peddling,
echo.

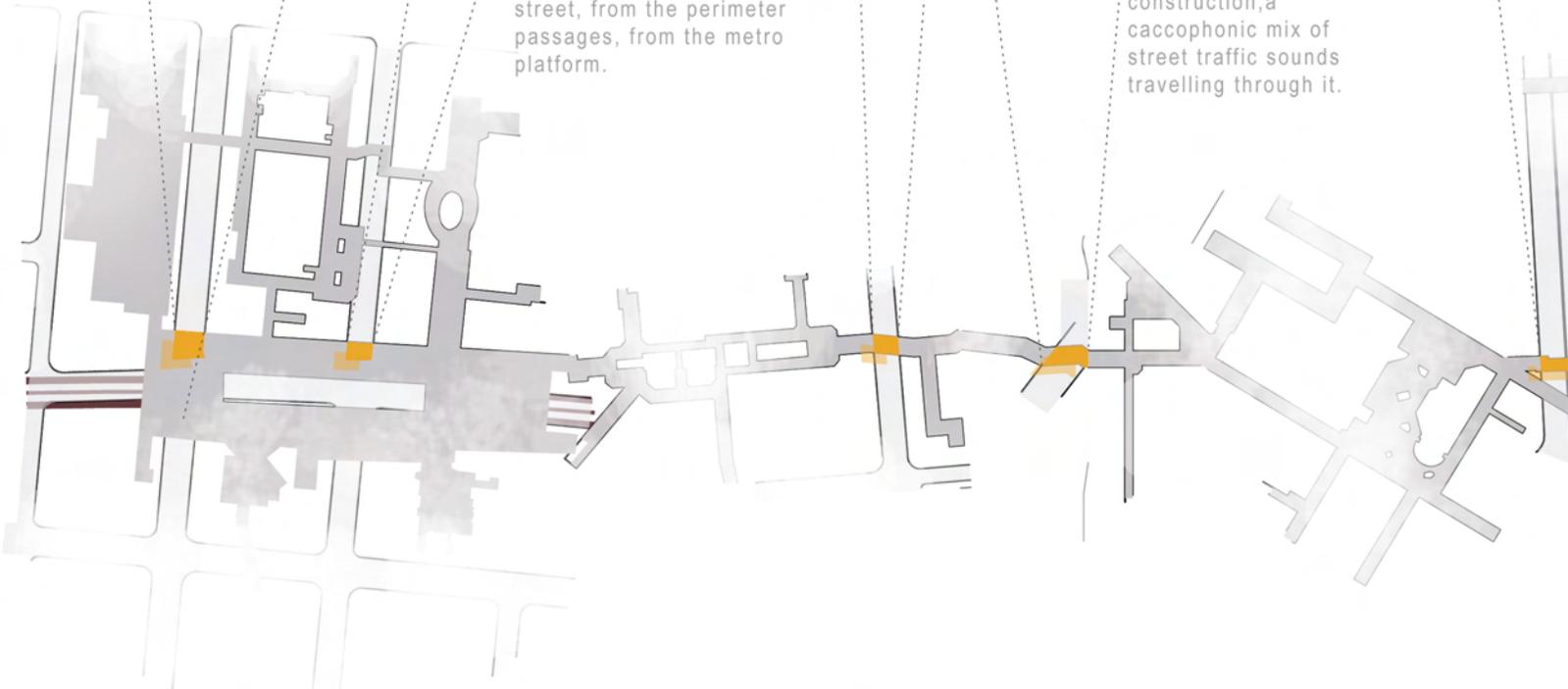


Traces of activity,
Flickers of footsteps,
Arrays of small-scale
perforations in the
structures separating the
street, from the perimeter
passages, from the metro
platform.

Rupturing



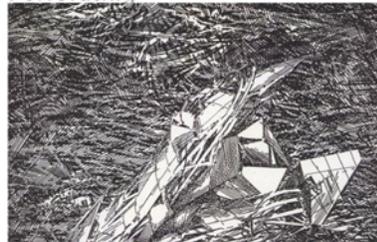
Between the malls,
Violently rough cuts
toward the street,
Remnants of past
construction, a
caccophonic mix of
street traffic sounds
travelling through it.



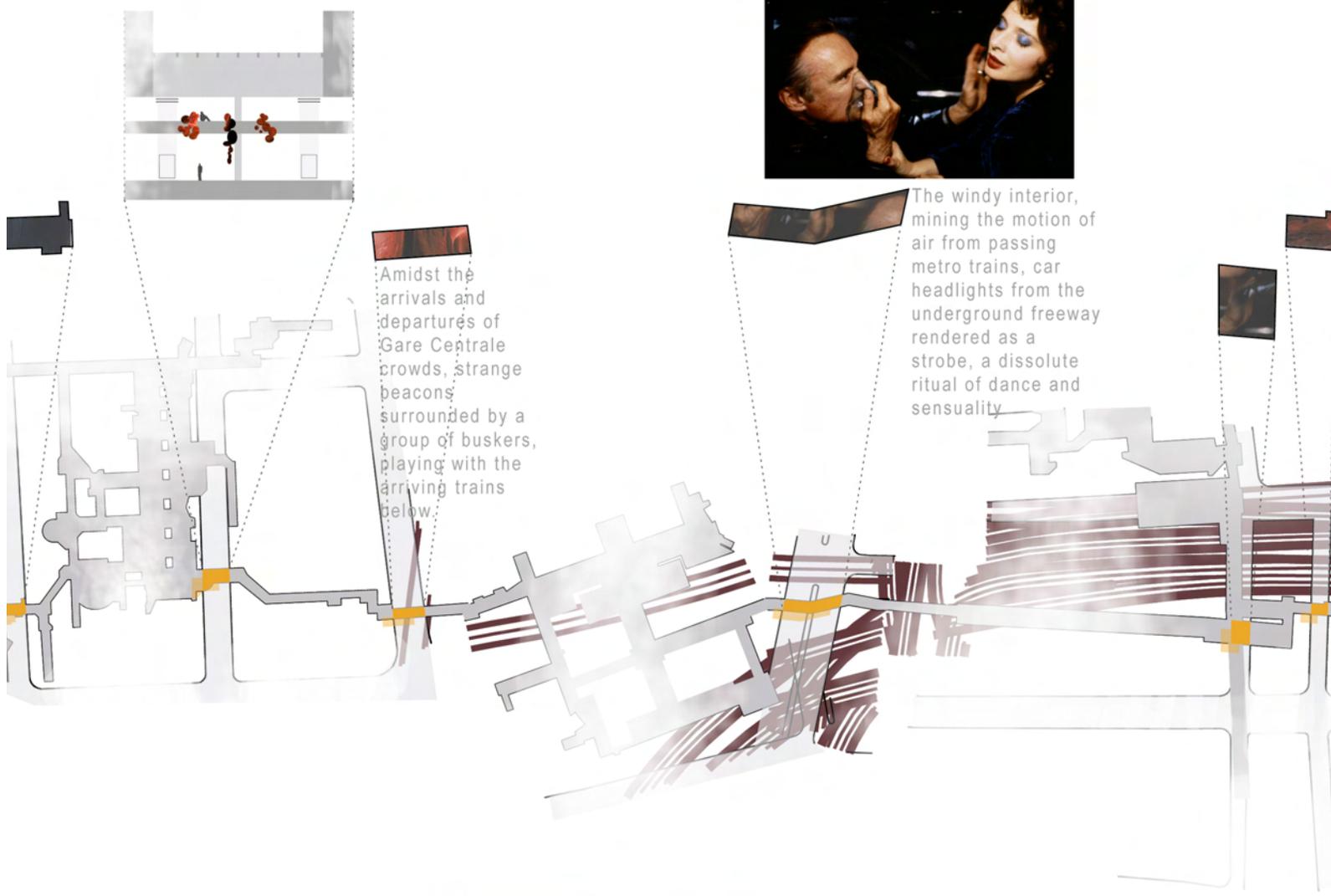
Enchanneling



Perforating



Drawn beneath the core by strange beacons and mysteries on the sidewalk billboards, the string of retail is ruptured by torn openings, v



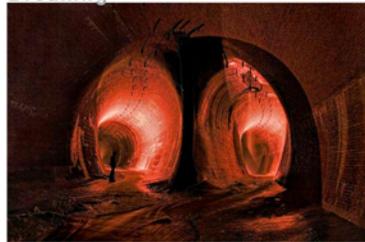
Charging



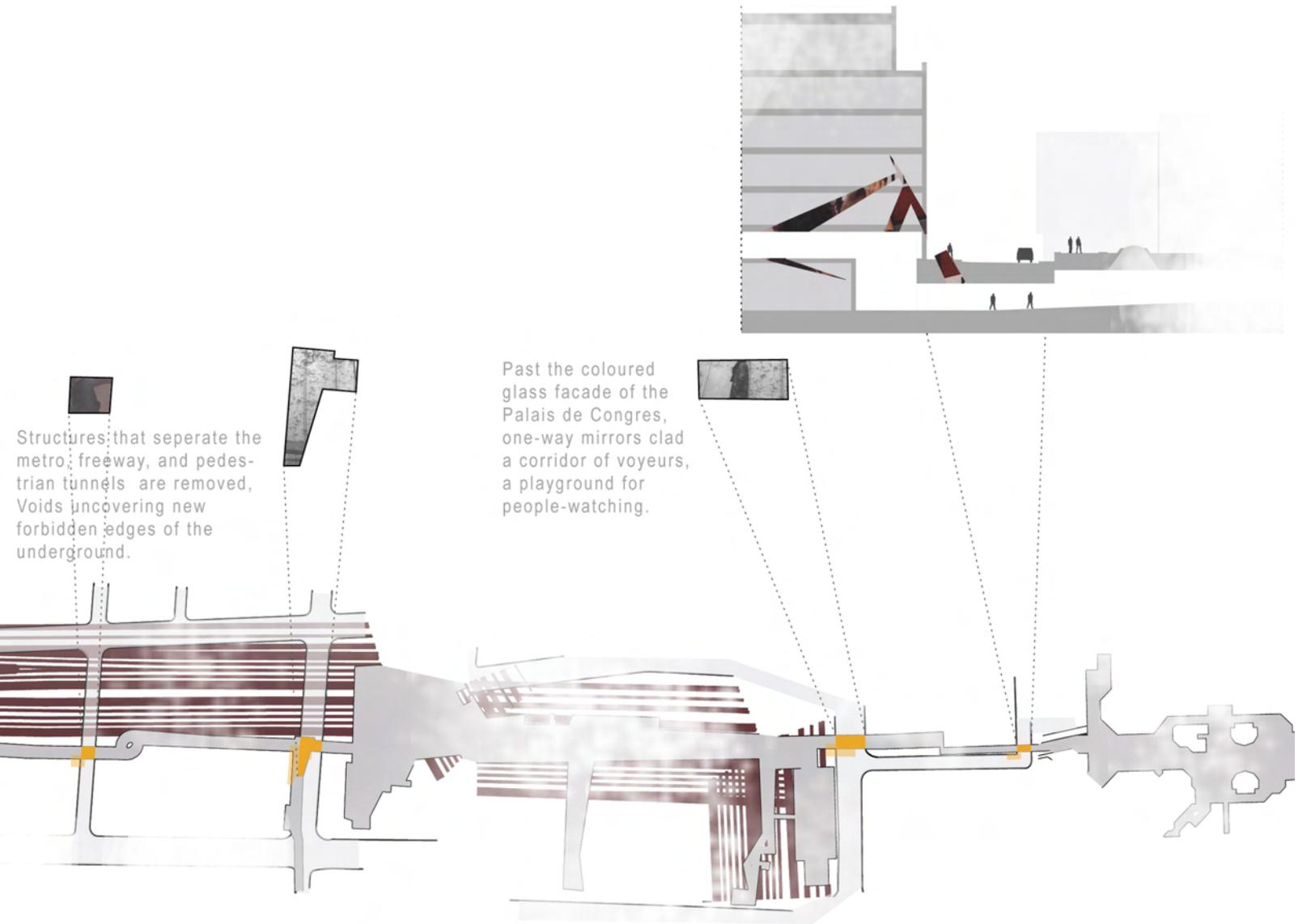
Amidst the arrivals and departures of Gare Centrale crowds, strange beacons surrounded by a group of buskers, playing with the arriving trains below.

The windy interior, mining the motion of air from passing metro trains, car headlights from the underground freeway rendered as a strobe, a dissolute ritual of dance and sensuality

Breaking



warding off a habit of reserve, confronting breaks that let in signs of weather, traffic, and distant echoing melodies, charging the underground with a



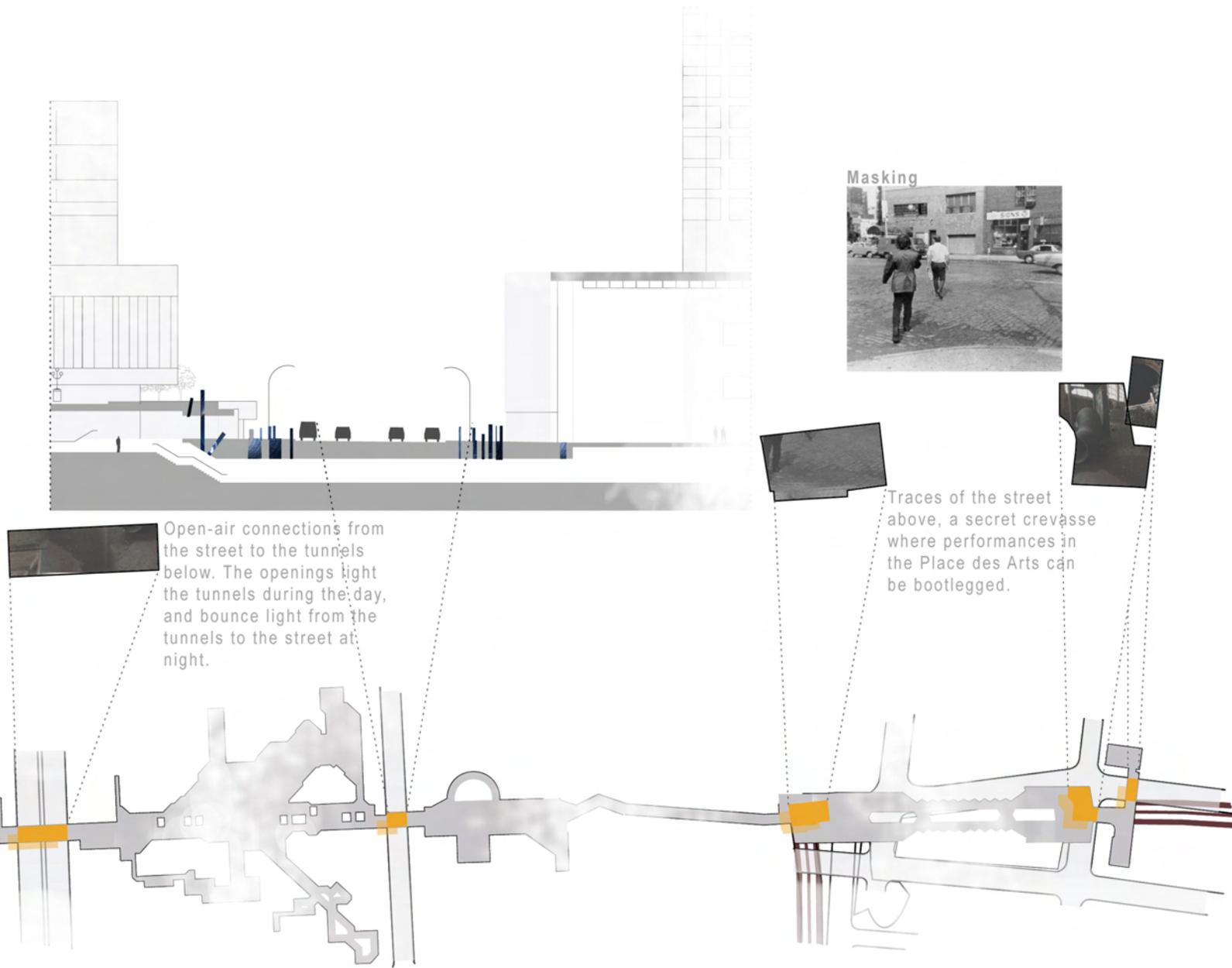
Pocketing



Peering



vibratory presence, lacing its surfaces with secret openings, passages, one-way mirrors from which one can peer from an unseen chamber, emergin



Puncturing



Intruding



g during rush hour, concealed in the crowd, drifting through downpours from punctures in the ceiling above, lowering in, enjoying.

Mysteries on the Sidewalk Billboards

Walter Benjamin's notion of the "colportage phenomenon [or peddling] of space" posits that anything potentially taking place within a space is perceived by the flâneur as a simultaneous layering of realities.¹³ These realities are partly what is actually seen and felt, and partly what the space coaxes from the imagination. This notion of simultaneous perception forms a spatial ambiance, an overall impression of the time and place, akin to a Lefebvrian moment, brimming with potential. Among this multiplicitous state lie the conditions for the city-dweller to maintain a state of active engagement. This thesis posits an approach to architecture that wards off the protective psychic organ described by Simmel as "reserve", by infusing the metropolis with spaces of sensual engagement, play and physicality.

Montreal's underground has been presented throughout this thesis as an urban network that has displayed a significant degree of inventiveness in its inception, but also as a banal and consequential system of interiors that does not fully live up to its romantic title. Primarily spaces for commuting and consuming, the network can often be perceived as intensely anesthetic, void of any haptic engagement and overly concerned with economic efficiency and interior design. Lying slightly beyond the anesthetic underground, Montreal, like many other cities, is laced with infrastructure that is unseen by the vast majority. The potency of these service spaces lie in their secrecy, and in the transgression inherent in intruding upon them. Here, architects are faced with the paradox of recreating the ambiance of the unknown, secret place. Although an impossible burden, this thesis presents a reading of transgressive activities as a means to coax this phenomena through architectural intervention.

The pleasure of exceeding limits, combined with a sensitivity to physicality, makes up the *erotic* phenomena enjoyed by transgressive urbanists. Sound, odour, touch, and texture, ensue from occupying new territory, discovering what was formerly unseen. These playful experiences are arguably the most serious

Figure 6.12
(pages 148-151)
Mysteries on the
sidewalk billboards.

engagements undertaken by the city-dweller, as simultaneous stimuli and in some cases, danger, demand full attention. Here, I return to the Benjaminian notion of spatial peddling, and the myth of the flâneur. While it has been said that the closest equivalent to the 19th century flâneur is the commuter, these figures who practice various forms of transgression in the urban sphere come closer to achieving “the colportage phenomenon of space, the flâneur’s basic experience.”¹⁴ The intensity and simultaneity of sensual perception is here most richly encountered by those who explore the edges of what is typically considered obedient and comfortable.

An infusion of sensuality, of haptic engagement is required for the spaces of Montreal’s underground city to exist in the ranks of Mount-Royal and the Expo islands, between which it is located. These two sites of celebration are oases, escapes from the dense urban center, and into a state of imagination and wonder. This thesis searches for this state of creative play in the urban center, through a filtered exposure to the activity occurring in the streets, and underground. In these subterranean chambers, an experiential collage occurs, combining the motion of air produced by passing subway trains, with the shifting temperatures of the seasons; and the sounds of subterranean freeway and street traffic with the sounds of musical performances around corners. Simultaneity of spatial experience lies latent among these zones.

Directing the design process toward these uncanny experiences requires a descent into one’s own *underground*, exercising methods that coax latent urges and visions. The fragmented process explored in the preceding pages mined the potential of fragments, in order to conjure underground resources. The emergent direction is a suggestion, a foggy geography, “secret maps and impossible fictions, rambling collections of events.”¹⁵

Endnotes

1. Calvino (1997, 15)
2. Lally et al. (2007, 51)
3. De Certeau (1984, 92)
4. Schafer (1977, 90)
5. Cage (1973, 3)
6. "A few notes about silence and John Cage". CBC.ca. 2004-11-24
8. McLuhan (1967, 63)
9. Lally et al. (2007, viii)
10. Lally et al. (2007, 39)
11. Calvino (1997, 15)
12. Halprin (1969, 85)
13. Benjamin (2002, 429)
14. *ibid.*
15. Tschumi (1994, 157)

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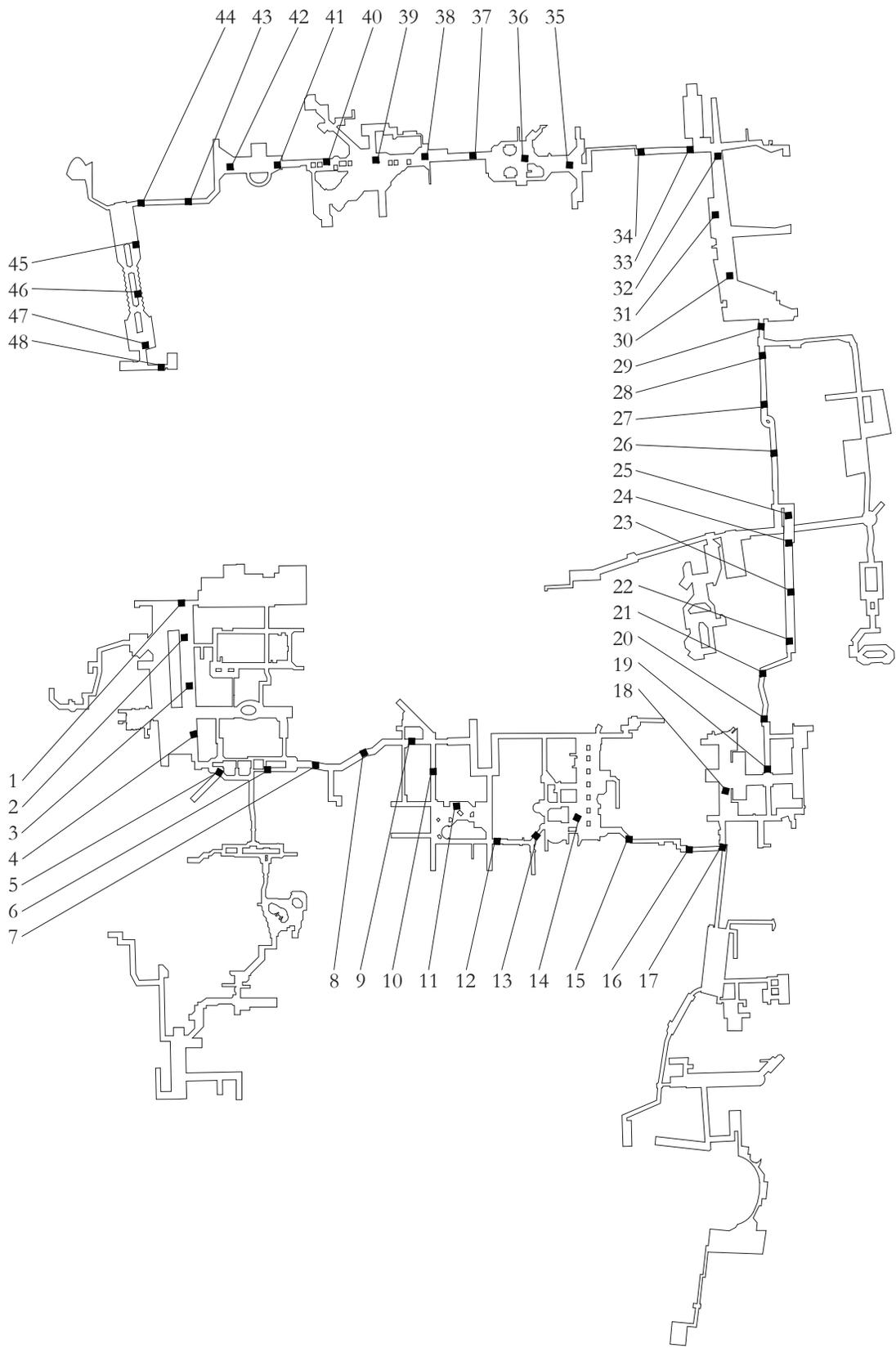
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Appendix The following photographs document the walk from McGill metro station to Place Des Arts metro station. At intervals of roughly 60m, a panoramic photo was taken at each point identified in the key plan.

Figure A
Appendix Key Plan.



Figure A.1
Sample point 1



Figure A.2
Sample point 2

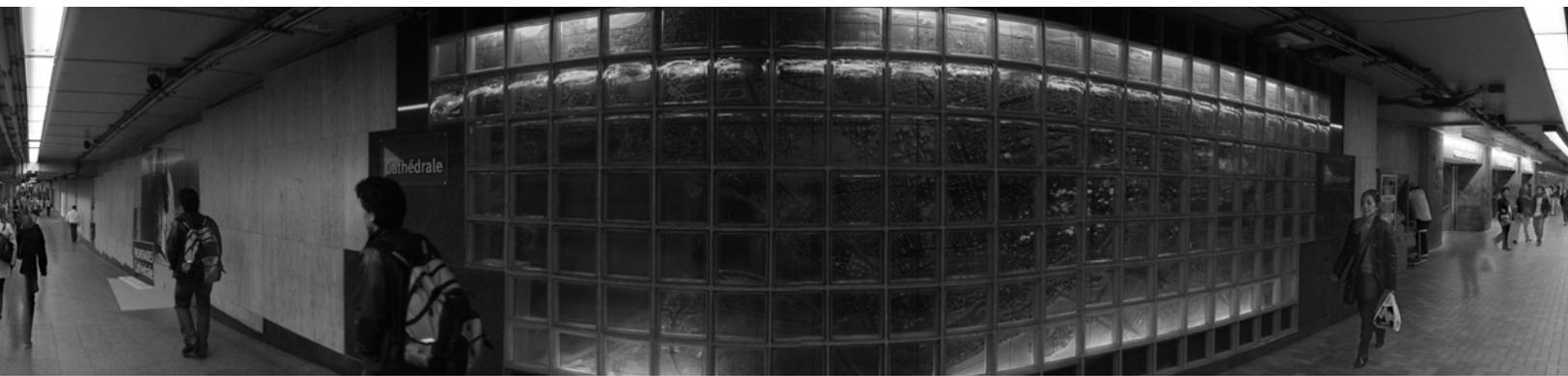


Figure A.3
Sample point 3



Figure A.4
Sample point 4

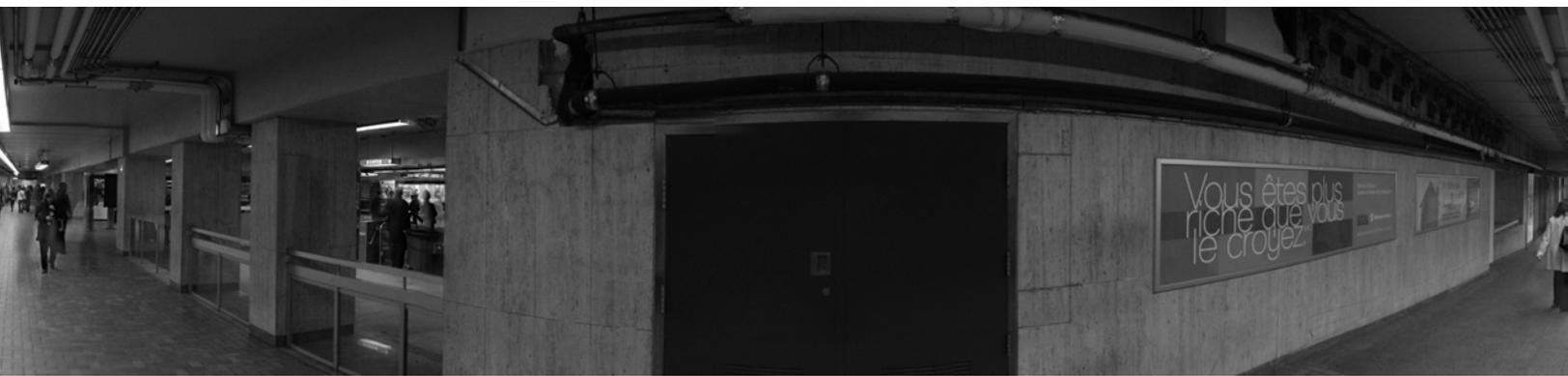




Figure A.5
Sample point 5



Figure A.6
Sample point 6



Figure A.7
Sample point 7



Figure A.8
Sample point 8





Figure A.9
Sample point 9



Figure A.10
Sample point 10



Figure A.11
Sample point 11

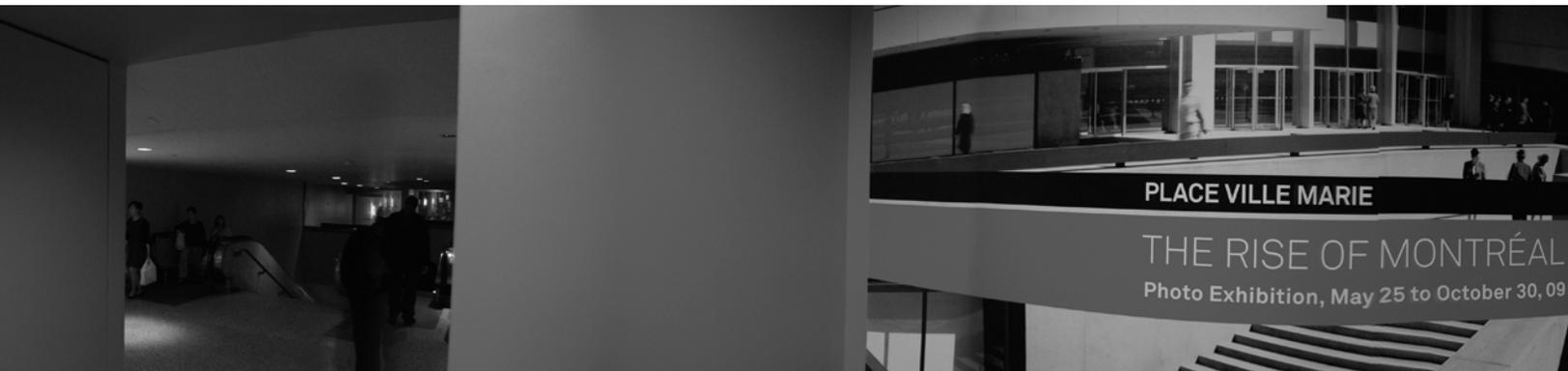


Figure A.12
Sample point 12





Figure A.13
Sample point 13



Figure A.14
Sample point 14

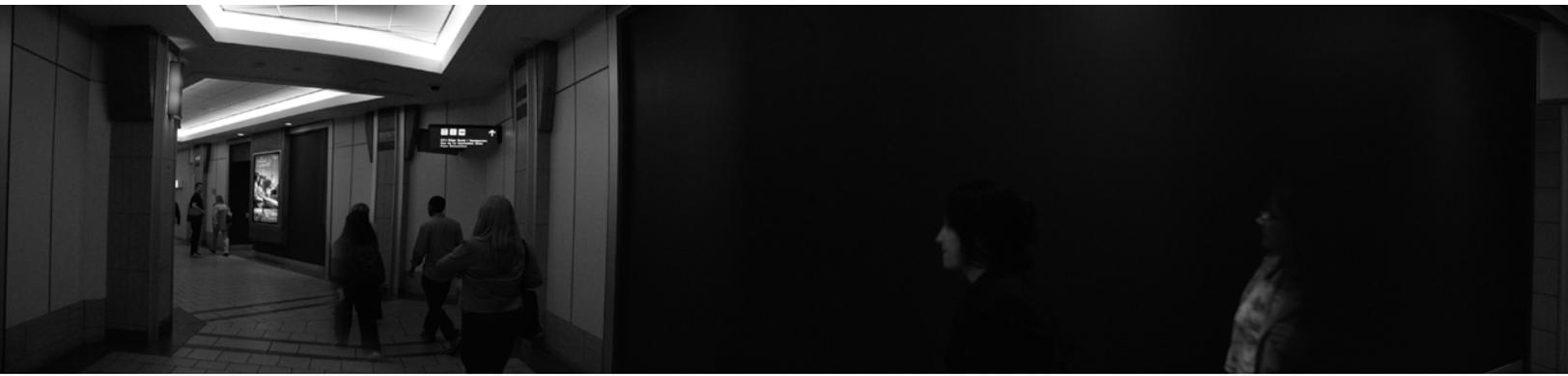


Figure A.15
Sample point 15



Figure A.16
Sample point 16





Figure A.17
Sample point 17



Figure A.18
Sample point 18



Figure A.19
Sample point 19

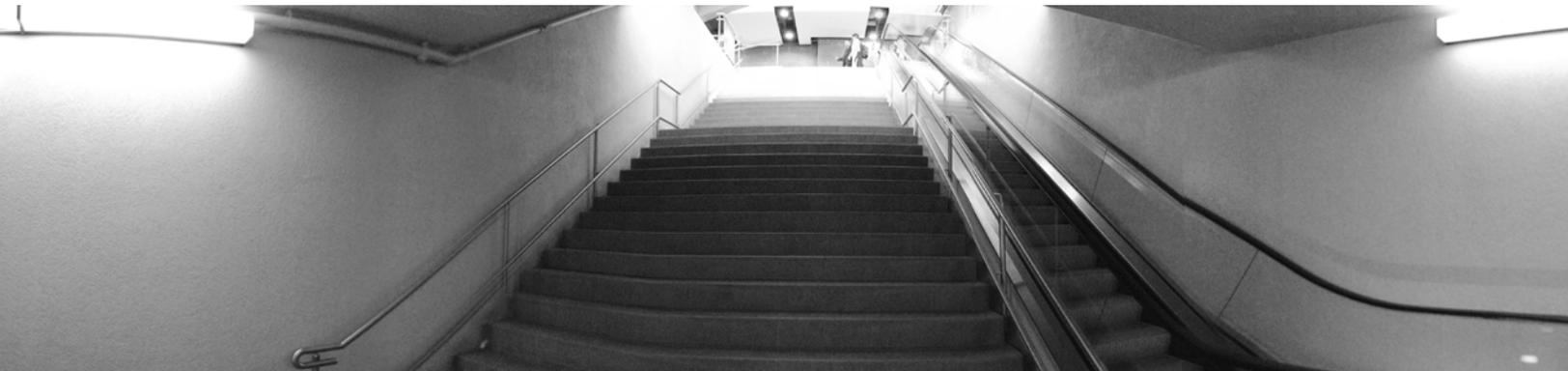
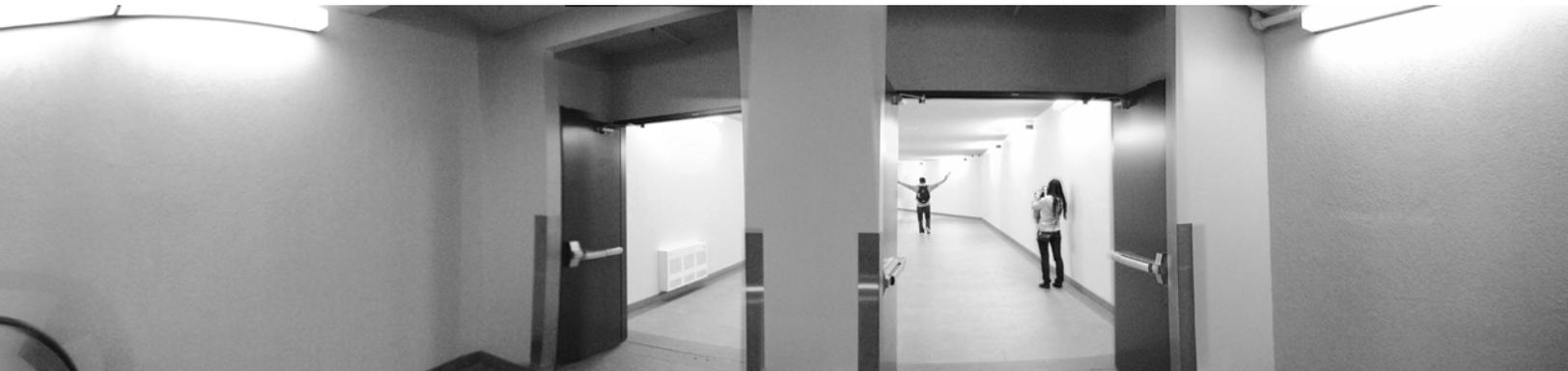


Figure A.20
Sample point 20



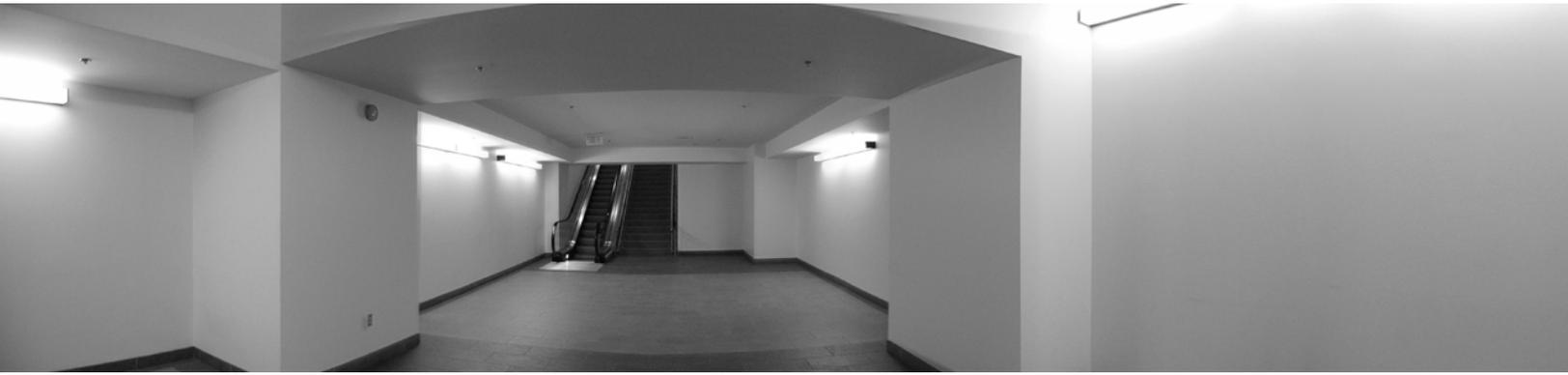


Figure A.21
Sample point 21

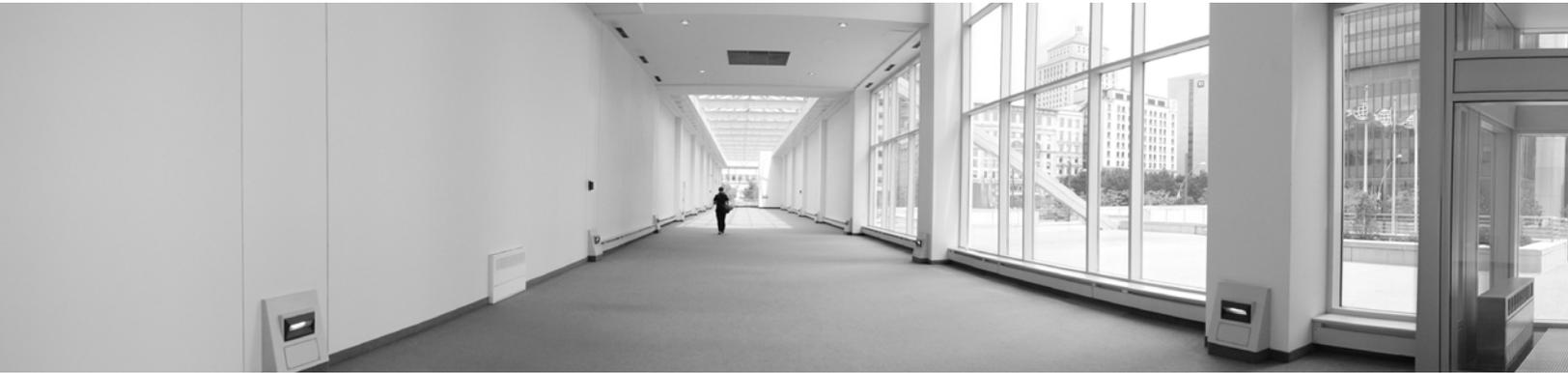


Figure A.22
Sample point 22



Figure A.23
Sample point 23



Figure A.24
Sample point 24





Figure A.25
Sample point 25



Figure A.26
Sample point 26

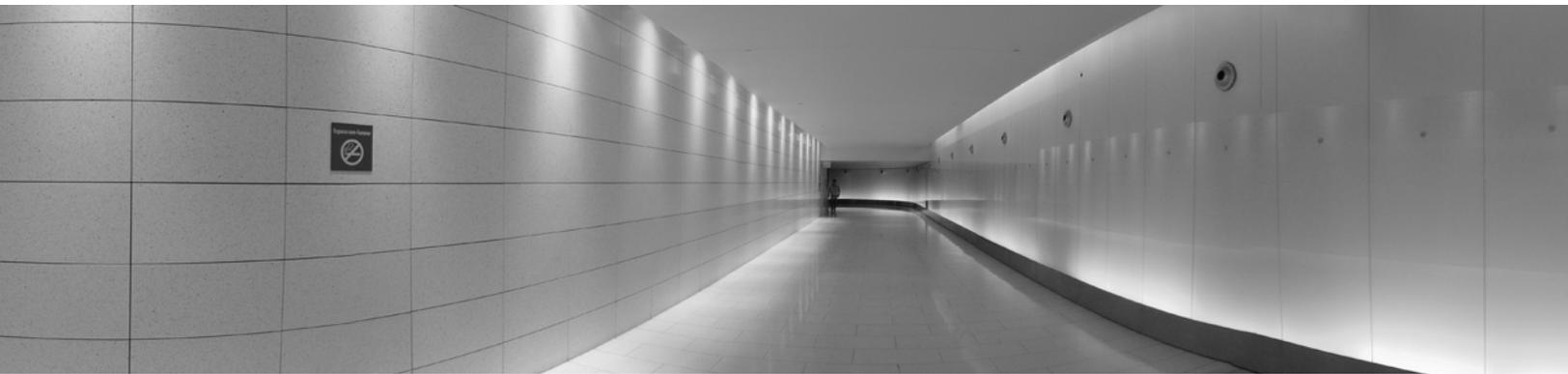


Figure A.27
Sample point 27



Figure A.28
Sample point 28



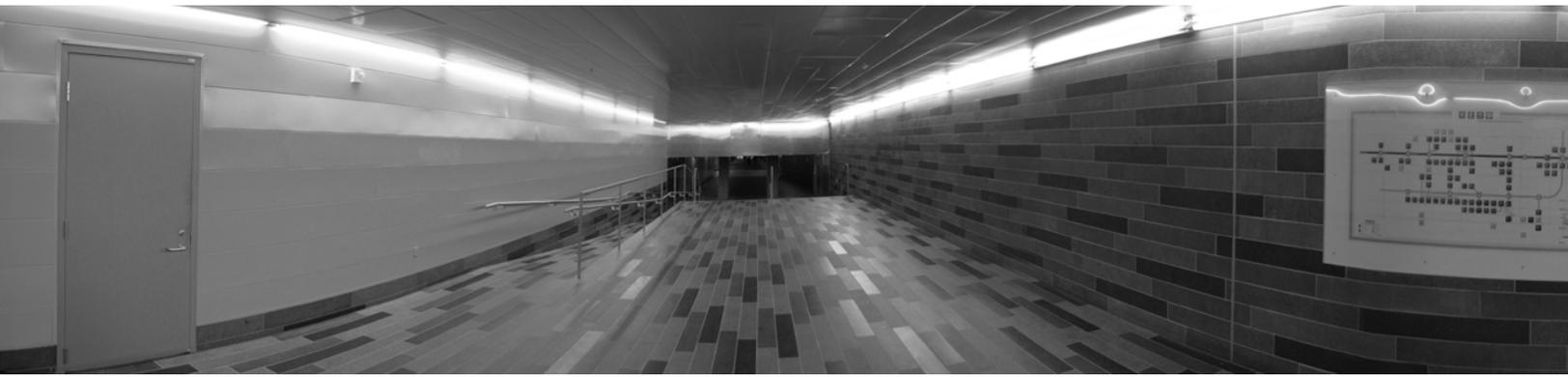


Figure A.29
Sample point 29



Figure A.30
Sample point 30



Figure A.31
Sample point 31



Figure A.32
Sample point 32





Figure A.33
Sample point 33



Figure A.34
Sample point 34

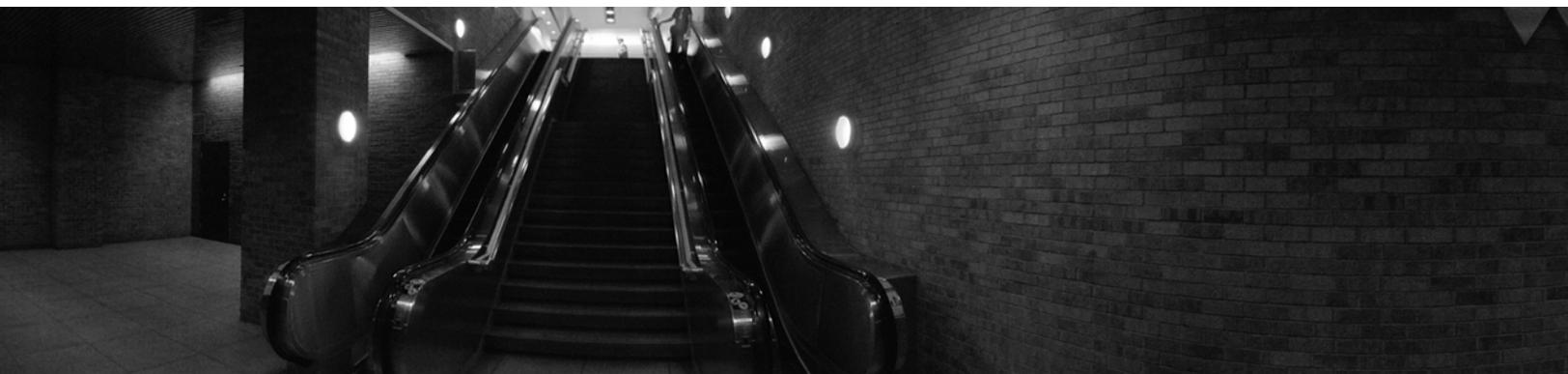


Figure A.35
Sample point 35



Figure A.36
Sample point 36

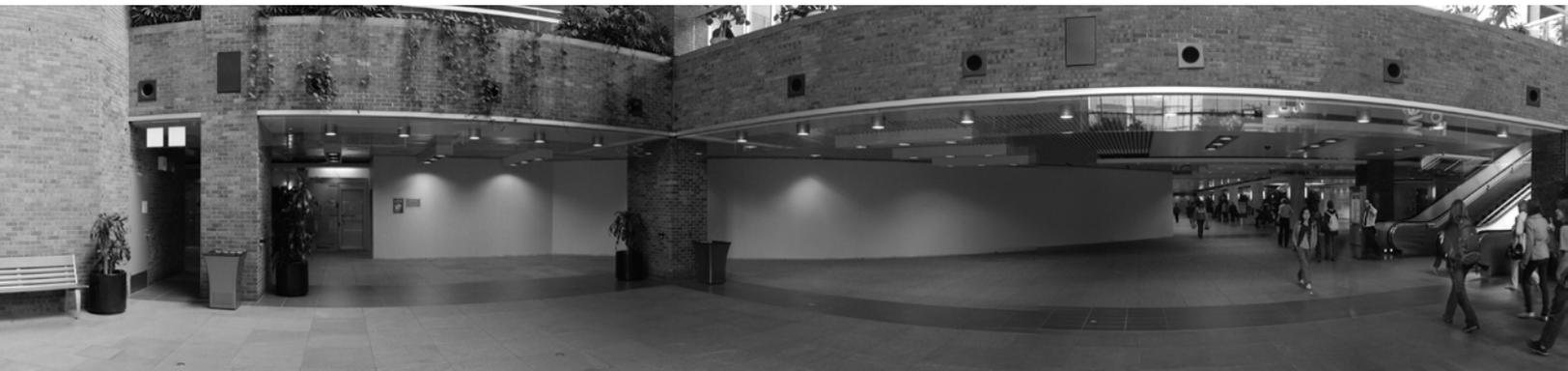




Figure A.37
Sample point 37



Figure A.38
Sample point 38



Figure A.39
Sample point 39



Figure A.40
Sample point 40





Figure A.41
Sample point 41



Figure A.42
Sample point 42



Figure A.43
Sample point 43



Figure A.44
Sample point 44





Figure A.45
Sample point 45



Figure A.46
Sample point 46



Figure A.47
Sample point 47



Figure A.48
Sample point 48

