



Étienne Tremblay-Tardif  
*Signage Matrix for Turcot Interchange Refection*, partial view of installation.  
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal  
Biennale de Montréal 2014, *L'avenir (looking forward)*.

## *Signage Matrix for Turcot Interchange Refection*

In the end, the construction of a new highway exchange system has begun over the Turcot yards. Adjacent to the neighborhoods of Saint-Henri and Côte-Saint-Paul in Montreal South-West, the defunct railroad yards, which used to be a queer hang out spot as well as a place to walk the dog, has now turned into a fenced off construction site complete with mounds of dirt, lines of trucks, lifts and cranes, stocks of pylons and rows of portable chemical toilets. Certain areas seem to act as headquarters for the ongoing emergency repairs which begun around 2009 on the elevated ramp system know as the Turcot Interchange. The landscape of gravel extends far to the west toward Angrignon and Montréal-Ouest exchanges. Future roadways are being sketched by leveling and grading. Sections of overpasses are already laid out in the vast expanse, left alone and awaiting pavement and connection. By 2022, a completely new interchange structure will have been built on the ground and on artificial embankments. At that point, the crumbling brutalist structure towering at one hundred feet will have been taken down, erased from the vista. At midpoint, the two structures will co-exist and automotive traffic will be rerouted from one to the other.

This essay surveys the complex and layered problematic surrounding the refection project for Turcot Interchange, a major highway exchange located in Montreal. By doing so, it will provide a backdrop to *Signage Matrix for Turcot Interchange Refection*, an ongoing body of installations, videos and shorts texts, which revolves around an open portfolio of unique double-sided prints of standard format. One of the discursive strategies involved in *Signage Matrix* has to do with trying to triangulate the construction of the Turcot highway complex with three events or ‘historical objects’ (Expo 67, the October crisis of 1970 and the CECO and Cliche Commissions instituted by Premier Robert Bourassa in 1973-74). By doing so, a temporal loop is established between the moments of construction and refection. One of the underlying theses of *Signage Matrix* is that the very idea or possibility of a future has been terminated and evacuated from the implemented refection plan instigated by the Ministry of Transport of Quebec (MTQ). This very quickly becomes apparent when starting to compare the original late modernist plan to the current refection plan. The retrospective/prospective matrix that I develop tries to reinject a bit of

futurology into the overarching problematic of the reconstruction by re-examining the notions of infrastructure/megastructure. *Signage Matrix for Turcot Interchange Refection* is an ongoing project/proposal of critical commemoration that is conceived as matrix, model and alternative conceptual framework for the new interchange. It privileges a densely layered historical *parti* as the old infrastructure is nearing the end of its life-cycle; it opposes the re-play of the modernist *tabula rasa*.

On the morning of April 25, 1967, at exactly six o'clock, the Turcot interchange was opened to automotive circulation. Its construction lasted just over a year. Three days later, Montreal was celebrating the opening of the 1967 International and Universal Exposition (Expo 67). The infrastructure was built in the heyday of social modernity (following *Révolution Tranquille*) and is part of Quebec architectural Modernism centered around Expo 67; a particularly late form of Modernism, already hinting at a subsequent bursting open/collapsing Postmodernism. The now crumbling infrastructural network designated as the Turcot Complex comprises *échangeur De La Vérendrye*, *échangeur Angrigon*, *échangeur Montréal-ouest* and *échangeur Turcot*. This last one connects the east-west axis of Autoroute-20 with the north-south axis of Autoroute-15 and with the underground Ville-Marie Expressway (Autoroute-720) that extends under downtown Montreal. The junction with Autoroute-720 was the last part of Turcot Interchange to be erected. The underground expressway opened in 1972 and its easternmost sections were completed in 1975. Overall, the City of Montreal will have contributed \$1.5 million, the Government of Quebec \$12.5 million, and the Federal Government \$10.5 million to the construction. It is estimated that six thousand people were expropriated and relocated with minimal compensation by the MTQ. Most expropriations occurred in the working class neighborhoods of Saint-Henri and Côte-Saint-Paul, notably in the *Village des Tanneries*, the oldest industrial village of Canada

whose last remaining blocks are slated for demolition for the forthcoming reflections. The Turcot Interchange partly sits over the eastern tip of the Turcot yards; railway yards which comprised the Canadian National Railways roundhouse (the largest ever built in Canada). The yards, now in disuse, were operational for over a century and still constitute the industrial area that withstood the longest continuous industrial activity in Montreal. It now also forms the most polluted brownfield of the city. The whole zone was, until the 19th century, a swampy patch of land surrounding the shallow *Lac à la loutre*. *Rivière Saint-Pierre* flowed through the site and is believed to be the original passageway used by indigenous people to circumvent the Lachine Rapids. During the 20th century, the yards have been used as a snow dump. They have been fenced off since 2009, when they were purchased by the MTQ from Canadian National Railway Company (CN).

It is no coincidence that the Interchange opens right before Expo 67. Like the Montreal subway system, iconic buildings like Place Ville Marie and the Underground City network of tunnels linking buildings in Downtown Montreal, the interchange forms part of a series of infrastructures that were designed to sustain and allow an impending surge of activity and development in the metropolis. Around 1966, plans are made by the city *Service d'urbanisme* to evaluate how the city would attain a population of 5 million by the year 2000.<sup>1</sup> (Fifty years later, it still hovers around 1.5 million for the island of Montreal and 3 millions for the greater Montreal.) Expo was perceived at the time to be the great thrust forward that will propel the city onto the world-historical stage and into super-modernity. Local daily *Le Devoir* adorns its April 28, 1967 cover with ambitious words from Mayor Jean Drapeau: “At the opening of Expo, Drapeau reveals a

---

<sup>1</sup> André Lortie, ed., *Les années 60, Montréal voit grand*, Montreal, Centre Canadien d'architecture, 2004, p. 26-29.

project: “To make *Terre des Hommes* a permanent world-city.”<sup>2</sup> *Terre des Hommes* was the central theme to Expo 67, but also designates the two artificial islands that make up the site for Expo. The ambitions of the city at the time, and the megalomania of Drapeau, are well known. What is more surprising in newspapers headlines is the insistence on vehicular traffic. “Dream Highways Soon A Reality,” “Roads To The Future,” and “Expressway Opens For Traffic” title *The Montreal Gazette* on May 15, 1965, June 30, 1966, and April 25, 1967. Most tellingly, *Le Devoir* headlines its front page on the morrow of the opening: “Over 250,000 persons at Expo yesterday. Computers had planned for 119,000! Daily traffic is barely affected.”<sup>3</sup> Beyond a certain infrastructural anxiety, the experience of getting to the site of Expo reveals a defining part in the totalizing experience that becomes any visit to the fair.

Design sociologist Rhona Richman Kenneally and art historian Johanne Sloan give an overview of the history of World Fairs in relation to the march of modernity in their introduction to *Expo 67, Not Just a Souvenir*:

If Expo 67 also announced a future world, by the 1960’s this futurity was already on the doorstep. And colonial-events had once denied the possibility of cultural change and improvements to non-Western participants, at Expo 67 the entire planet was apparently becoming modern in sync. Indeed Expo 67 made it seem as if modern life was accessible to all visitors, to embrace and take home.<sup>4</sup>

Fast-forward to 1970 and the events of the October Crisis; cracks start to appear on this depiction of a new and better way of life for all. Political agitation and political violence is remarkably strong in Quebec between 1962 and 1972. Unrest spreads to a wider audience from 1968-69 onward with students and workers strikes. October 1970 sees the kidnapping of Minister of

---

<sup>2</sup> Free translation of original headline in French : “À l’inauguration d’Expo, Drapeau révèle un projet : « Faire de la Terre des Hommes une cité mondiale permanente ».”

<sup>3</sup> Free translation of original headline in French : “Plus de 250,000 personnes à l’Expo, hier. Les calculatrices avaient prévu 119,000 ! La circulation habituelle, à peine affectée.”

<sup>4</sup> Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan, “Introduction : Dusting Off the Souvenir”, in Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan, eds., *Expo 67, Not Just a Souvenir*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010, p.11.

Labour Pierre Laporte in front of his residence by members of the Chénier Cell of Front de Libération du Québec. British Trade Commissioner James Cross is kidnapped five days earlier by members of the Libération Cell, and will be released on December 4 under the origami-like roof-structure of the former Canadian pavilion of the World Fair.<sup>5</sup> Pierre Laporte is found dead in the trunk of an abandoned car on October 17. His kidnapping had put an end to the Sûreté du Québec (SQ) investigation on the minister's relations with the Cotroni crime organization. It will be revealed 40 years later that Premier Robert Bourassa had been informed of Laporte's ties to the Cotroni family many months before the Minister of Labour's kidnapping. It had been decided between the Premier's cabinet and high-ranking SQ officers to not incriminate Laporte.<sup>6</sup> To this day, the exact circumstances of Pierre Laporte's death the day following the declaration of the War Measures Act by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau remain unclear.

Nevertheless, Premier Robert Bourassa calls forth the *Commission d'enquête sur le crime organisé* (CECO) in 1972 and the Royal Commission investigating the exercise of trade-union freedom in Quebec's construction industry (Cliche Commission) in 1973. Both will draw the outlines of a long history linking organized crime, the construction industry and political financing. In 1975, CECO reveals that the Reggio Food Company is implicated in a tainted meat distribution network. This provokes a province-wide scandal. The company was partly a creation of mafia boss Vic Cotroni, who had helped Laporte run for the leadership of the Quebec Liberal Party in January 1970, as well as for the provincial elections in April of that same year. Reggio Food had been the official food distributor at Expo 67.

---

<sup>5</sup> Inderbir Singh Riar, "Montreal and the Megastructure, ca 1967", in Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan, eds., *Expo 67, Not Just a Souvenir*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010, p. 207.

<sup>6</sup> André Noël, "Le ministre Pierre Laporte était sur écoute, révèle un livre", *La Presse*, October 2 2010. [online]. [<http://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/crise-doctobre/201010/02/01-4328933-le-ministre-pierre-laporte-etait-sur-ecoute-revele-un-livre.php>] (11/07/2014).

During the 2000s, a somewhat similar climate of political corruption, political agitation and armed repression is slowly deployed as the backdrop of Quebec's actuality. Arguably different from the 'rise of nationalism' period of 1962-1972, the 2000s nonetheless see a return to a radicalization in discourses and actions. Running parallel to the return to power of Parti Libéral du Québec (PLQ) with Jean Charest as acting Premier from 2003 to 2012, a new paradigm of resistance is developed along local and global axes. The 3rd Summit of the Americas is held in Quebec City in 2001 and Occupy Montreal settles camp in Victoria Square between October 15 and November 25, 2011. Most notably, the student movement organizes major strikes in 2005 and 2012 in direct response to financial measures imposed by the Charest government. For our purpose, the Charest era can be interestingly framed by two moments. Firstly, in 2004, within months of its entry to power, the Liberal government creates a consultation table following the demands of *Association des ingénieurs du Québec* where engineering firms like SNC-Lavalin, Dessau, Roche, Génivar and BPR become involved in the planning of major works commissioned by the MTQ. Many engineers from the Ministry are fired and the private firms inherit the responsibility to control cost overruns on their own projects. Secondly, in 2011, within a year of its demise and after two years of demands from many members of the National Assembly, Premier Jean Charest creates the Commission of Inquiry on the Awarding and Management of Public Contracts in the Construction Industry (Charbonneau Commission). The Commission will investigate corruption at the municipal level, ties between organized crime, workers' unions and the construction industry. If it stops short of exposing links between the aforementioned parties and political financing at a provincial level, Julie Boulet, who was the Liberal Minister of Transports between 2007 and 2010, will still make a controversial appearance before Charbonneau Commission claiming in turns; that she was not aware of the cost of the

election campaigns in her riding; that her campaign did not cost more than the amount allowed by law; and that she did not know what the amount permitted by law was.<sup>7</sup> It will also come to the attention of the public, outside of the Commission hearings, that PLQ political organizer Eddy Brandone (who also happened to be a high-ranking officer in the FTQ union and had admitted relations with Mafiosi Johnny Bertolo and Raynald Desjardins) was skiptraced in the context of the SQ investigation codenamed Diligence. The information was leaked that in March 2009, an order was given to interrupt the skiptracing precisely as Brandone meets Premier Charest at a hotel in Dorval.<sup>8</sup>

Back on the highway exchange, Ministers of Transports Julie Boulet and Sam Hamad maintained for as long as possible that its apparent wear and tear was only superficial and cosmetic. After a piece of concrete had detached itself from an access ramp to fall many meters lower on Notre-Dame street in July 2008, circulation was reduced on many lanes and emergency repairs began in 2011: iron meshes will be spread underneath the ramps, reinforcing steel added to the structure and concrete poured anew on damaged surfaces. A proposal to replace the old interchange is designed in 2009 and slightly revised 2012 by the MTQ.<sup>9</sup> In a way, the proposal put forward is a replay of the modernist *tabula rasa*; the original structure will be razed and replaced by a completely new one, built lower on artificial embankments; an estimated 400 residents will be evicted from Saint-Rémi street and Cazalais street (the last vestige of the historical *Village des Tanneries*), portions of which are slated for demolition. These refection proposals, above and

---

<sup>7</sup> Brian Myles, “Julie Boulet nie avoir touché au financement”, *Le Devoir*, 15 mai 2014, [online]. [<http://www.ledevoir.com/politique/quebec/408333/commission-charbonneau-julie-boulet-nie-avoir-touche-au-financement>] (11/08/2014).

<sup>8</sup> Alain Gravel and Marie-Maude Denis, “L’interruption de la filature d’un ex-dirigeant de la FTQ-Construction soulève des questions”, Radio-Canada, August 23 2012, [online]. [<http://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelles/societe/2012/08/08/004-filature-eddy-brandone.shtml>] (11/08/2014).

<sup>9</sup> See MINISTÈRE DES TRANSPORTS DU QUÉBEC, Turcot, [online]. [[www.turcot.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.turcot.gouv.qc.ca)] (05/10/2013).



beyond their effects on local populations, impacts on ecological systems and lack of creative design despite inflated costs,<sup>10</sup> fail to recognize the role major infrastructures play in the urban fabric.<sup>11</sup> That is as opposed to the original modernist construction which, despite its questionable vision and its many ties to corrupted politics, was certainly conceived as a visually striking symbol: a technological feat and a tool in the strategic deployment of a new way to live. The refection plan that will be implemented (and which should more appropriately be identified as a demolition/reconstruction plan) has been drained of any formal or socio-structural ambition. The new interchange is aimed at maintaining a status quo of ever-increasing automotive traffic, states of crisis and jams : can greed and corruption congeal into an ideology...even a ‘satisficing’ one?<sup>12</sup> Between 2003 and 2012, the PLQ government has arguably and consistently been stealing the future. What kind of symbol can a 3D rendering of the hybridization of mini-golf and landscaping arrangements in a suburban mall parking lot with trees growing under viaducts be?<sup>13</sup>

Media and architecture theorists Sanford Kwinter and Daniela Fabricius depict the city as “a perpetually organizing field of forces in movement, each city a specific and unique combination of historical modalities in *dynamic composition*. [...] Infrastructures,” they insist, “perhaps more than anything else, constitute the historical element in cities, they are preeminently their engines of change.”<sup>14</sup> Following an enumeration too long to reproduce here, the authors state their working premise if not their overarching thesis for *Urbanism: An Archivist's Art*:

---

<sup>10</sup> MOBILISATION TURCOT, « MTQ project » and « Impacts », [online]. [turcot.info/en] (05/11/2013).

<sup>11</sup> For an overview of the complete refection saga: LA PRESSE, « Reconstruction de l'échangeur Turcot », Dossiers, [online]. [www.lapresse.ca/dossiers/reconstruction-de-lechangeur-turcot] (05/10/2013).

A complete Press File on the Interchnage can also be found through the research center at the Canadian Center for Architecture.

<sup>12</sup> See Fabricius and Kwinter's definition of this neologism on page 9 on the present essay.

<sup>13</sup> MINISTÈRE DES TRANSPORTS DU QUÉBEC, “Présentation modélisée du projet Turcot”, [online]. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5fAoSc-Uhw] (11/11/2014).

<sup>14</sup> Sanford Kwinter and Daniela Fabricius, “Urbanism : An Archivist's Art ?”, Rem Koolhaas et al., *Mutations*, Bordeaux, Arc en rêve centre d'architecture, 2000, p.495-496.

The City today, to a greater degree than ever before, actually *is* those data sets and *is* those networks of public equipment through which the data circulates. Our rapidly disarticulating city is increasingly reconstituting itself in vitro as a dynamic archive, where the latter term is understood as a massive depository of local and global knowledge that, in the manner of any natural ecology, provide a maximally flexible, “satisficing” (“suffice” plus “satisfy”) infrastructure for life.<sup>15</sup>

This view on the city fabric might take root in postwar and earlier discussions, but certainly underpins architectural ideas at Expo 67:

[The world fair] came to be celebrated as emblematic of avant-gardist theories on the ‘megastructure’. A symbol of the optimism of large-scale thinking of the 1960s, the megastructure was broadly imagined to be a flexible framework that enclosed the functions of a city, thereby making immanent new forms human interaction, social control, and the technical organization of space. Central to the heroic articulation of the megastructure were the techniques of long-span structures, inside or under which would be housed a new mass public. [...] The most perspicacious and polemical architects and critics did not, however, see the megastructures of Expo 67 in isolation; rather, they read these architectures against the backdrop of what had already been labeled as Montreal’s ‘multilevel city’, where a new ‘core’ of subterranean links between skyscrapers and public infrastructures was described as a ‘network’ and an ‘organism’.<sup>16</sup>

Reyner Banham will further develop this argument, notably in his 1976 book *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past*. In the chapter devoted to Montreal as Megacity, he gives a description of the city based on a photograph that appeared in the *Architectural Review* journal in August 1967. We see and read in this ‘comprehensive airview’: the artificial islands Notre-Dame and Sainte-Hélène; different pavilions distributed around the prominent Man the Producer pavilion; the monorail which circumvented the fair grounds; a bridge that crosses over the Saint Lawrence River, grain elevators in the old port, the new towers of the downtown core and the presumed tunnel systems linking those towers to the subway system and to the two Expo islands.<sup>17</sup> Even though transportation systems are clearly evoked in Banham’s description, Turcot

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.501-502.

<sup>16</sup> Inderbir Singh Riar, “Montreal and the Megastructure, ca 1967”, in Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan, eds., *Expo 67, Not Just a Souvenir*, Toronto, Univeristy of Toronto Press, 2010, p. 193.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

Interchange is excluded from the photographed south-north axis of downtown Montreal, as it lies on the outskirts of the city, towards the south-west. Banham would have not missed its 'long span structures, inside or under which would be housed a new mass public', but maybe, like many others at the time, could not have predicted its decisive role in the decidedly horizontal, as opposed to 'multilevel', development of future cities.

Starting July 2009, *Signage Matrix for Turcot Interchange Refection* has revolved around a printed journal or logbook of researched and collaged material. This journal or portfolio now consists of over 800 prints that are developed at different pace with the techniques of screenprinting, photolithography, digital printing, relief printing and embossing, stenciling and monoprinting. Some of these prints are now considered finished while a majority remains in process. Most sheets are printed on both sides, many of them having negative design cut-outs. They are standard in format, yet all unique. Primarily photographic and textual fragments are combined with mineral-like textures, gridded patterns, color flats and geometric shapes. These images and fragments accumulate in different ways on each sheet. They refer to road signage, architectural drawings and plans, activists' posters and pamphlets. Together, the prints form a portfolio/archive that can be presented in a variety of ways: displayed on the wall, deployed in space, flat on tables or stored in piles or boxes. While the portfolio was firstly conceived as a research journal, a site to gather information and document research, it progressively evolved into something else: a constructivist-like arrangement of forms suggesting architectural designs, the visuality of construction equipment or road signage, and an exploding configuration of information in flux. This is the result of the sheer density of printed layers, the zoom effect produced by drastic changes of scale, and the use of metallic inks, saturated primaries and neon colors. Starting with a conceptual and documentary aesthetic of photographic grayscale, the

printed sheets progressively acquired a new sense of form or formality. Informed by post-structuralist thinking, they exist somewhere between early twentieth century constructivist design and Québécois *plasticien* painting of the second half of the twentieth century.

When using the flexible and light installation strategy of hanging the prints on intersecting metal wires that animate the exhibition space, the work suggests a sculpturally flat display of information dispersed between highway lanes; a ghost of the defunct modern infrastructure. Part archive and part prospective plan (addressing both past and future, establishing in this way a relationship to the ‘here and now’) the installation becomes a model, or more precisely a ‘matrix’, for a commemorative public artwork or *aménagement* that would mark the site of the soon to be destroyed interchange. It can just as well be understood as the matrix for a ‘virtual’ interchange, or infrastructure. At that point, the distinctions between artwork, actual ‘hard’ infrastructure and virtual ‘soft’ infrastructure begin to blur, as all are understood as commemorative devices. The idea of a layered cyberarchive superimposed on the actual site of the interchange is not so far removed from the futuristic aspirations of the original 1967 construction. Fiction writer William Gibson, credited with the invention of both the cyberpunk genre and the cyberspace neologism, sets some of his most recent novels in perfectly contemporary settings where technologies hint at potential and impending developments:

“Someone told me that cyberspace was ‘everting’. That was how she put it.”

“Sure. And once it everts, then there isn’t any cyberspace, is there? There never was, if you want to look at it that way. It was a way we had of looking where we were headed, a direction. With the grid, we’re here. This is the other side of the screen. Right here.” He pushed his hair aside and let both blue eyes drill into her.

[...]

She thought about it. “But each one of those sites, or servers, or... portals...?”

He nodded. “Each one shows you a different world. Alberto’s shows me River Phoenix dead on a sidewalk. Somebody else’s shows me, I don’t know, only good things. Only kittens, say. The world we walk around in would be channels.”

She cocked her head at him. “Channels?”

“Yes. And given what broadcast television wound up being, that doesn’t sound so good. But think about blogs, how each one is actually trying to describe reality.”

“They are?”

“In theory.”

“Okay.”

“But when you look at blogs, where you’re most likely to find the real info is in the links. It’s contextual, and not only who the blog’s linked to, but who’s linked to the blog.”

She looked at him. [...]

“Then why aren’t more people doing it? How’s it different from virtual reality? Remember when we were all going to be doing that?” [...]

“We’re all doing VR, every time we look at a screen. We have been for decades now. We just do it. We didn’t need the goggles, the gloves. It just happened. VR was an even more specific way we had of telling us where we were going. Without scaring us too much, right? The locative, though, lots of us are already doing it. But you can’t just do the locative with your nervous system. One day, you will. We’ll have internalized the interface. It’ll have evolved to the point where we forget about it. Then you’ll just walk down the street...”<sup>18</sup>

In parallel to this description that Gibson gives us of a ‘locative art’ model and following Rosalind Krauss’ analysis of the indexical relation that seventies art maintained with the world or with site specificity, Mary Ann Doane unpacks the shifting nature of the index (translated into both *index* and *indice* in French), as opposed to the more stable definitions of icon and symbol in Peirce’s semiology:

On the one hand, the term seems to specify signs on the order of the trace – the footprint, the death mask, the photograph (where the object leaves its imprint on a light-sensitive surface). This type of index partakes of the iconic because the sign resembles the object. On the other hand, Peirce emphasizes that the shifter in language – a category including pronouns such as “this”, “now”, “I”, “here” -- is an exemplary form of the index. In this case, the index partakes of the symbolic. In both these instances, the index is defined by a physical, material connection to its object.<sup>19</sup>

More importantly, the author goes on to re-contextualize Krauss’s reference to photography, as providing the ‘source’ for the indexical, in the present digital context: “perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the desire for a photographic logic has only been intensified by the emergence

---

<sup>18</sup> William Gibson, *Spook Country*, New York, Berkley, 2007, p. 86-88.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Ann Doane, “Indexicality : Trace and Sign : Introduction”, *Differences : A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Volume 18, Number 1, 2007, p.2.

of the digital. And in the spirit of Krauss's initial reading, much of the current work on photographic image stresses not realism, but performativity and trace."<sup>20</sup> Perhaps too the notion of the 'index' should be replaced by the notion of the 'vector':<sup>21</sup>

In geometry, a vector is a line of fixed length but of no fixed position. It has definite dimensions, but potentially could start at any point whatever, and connect any point within it's radius. In epidemiology, a vector is a specific means of transmission for an infection, such as water, air or bodily fluids, through which any body could be connected to another body. With technology, a vector might be the potential to connect one thing to another, a particular relation, but with no specified coordinates. The vectorial, in other words, is the technics of the open, of virtuality.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout this essay, Wark develops the idea that:

Balance shifts, within architecture, from the construction of envelopes, to the construction of planes. Architects build models that might be buildings, buildings might be models of what might become of the state. Perhaps the state too, can be a plane, rather than an enclosure. But this would be a very different state to the kind we know. [...] Maybe architecture isn't about envelopes at all. Maybe it is about vectors across time. Communications technology creates vectors that move information across space. Architecture creates vectors that move information across time.<sup>23</sup>

In many ways, this is what *Signage Matrix* aims to perform. It argues for a layered and complex approach to the interchange refraction that is based in its historical, political and formal dimensions while questioning the function of infrastructures in shaping, *structuring* and *infra-structuring*, public space (or what remains of that 'open plane'). It intends to displace the question of the refraction from a simple problem of vehicular traffic and cost-efficiency to a problem of information circulation and historical flow. Literally a modern ruin in the making, barely held together by patchworks of bolted nets of chain-link and quick fixes of cement-compounds, the interchange in its present state of decay appears as an architecture that generates

---

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>21</sup> See Nicolas Bourriaud on *viatorisation* in *Radicant, Pour une esthétique de la globalisation*, Paris, Denoël, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> McKenzie Wark, "Telegram from Nowhere", Rem Koolhaas et al., *Mutations*, Bordeaux, Arc en rêve centre d'architecture, 2000, p. 32.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

knowledge and meaning. With the eminent demolition of the elevated and long-span structures, *Signage Matrix* operates as an archeological enterprise that rebuilds a ghost monument through the accumulation, fragmentation and circulation of documents/information. Kwinter and Fabricius remind us that “the idea of the ‘archive’ as the intellectual and social infrastructure of a civilization, as well as a fully ‘material’ and conductive continuum is Michel Foucault’s. He was the first to transform the sphere of documents into that of monuments.”<sup>24</sup> The two authors find in Foucault’s *Archeology of Knowledge* a definitive precedent for their vision of a praxis of urbanism as an archivist’s art (or ‘anarchivist’s art’ to use Hal Foster’s term). *Signage Matrix* also finds a place within a network of related projects or concepts for alternative urban design. While Constant’s *New Babylon* and the whole Situationist program remain important touchstones, *Signage Matrix* also brings to mind Mitchell Schwarzer’s account of the 1964 book *The View From the Road* by Appleyard, Lynch and Myer:

Like the views available to pedestrians in historic cities, the views of a large modern city from its highways help us to comprehend the form and meaning of a place. But unlike the pedestrian view, the highway view supplies a new type of machine-driven knowledge. [...] “Would it be possible to use the highway as a means of education, a way of making the driver aware of the function, history, and human values of his world ? The highway could be a linear exposition, running by the vital centers, exposing the working parts, picking out the symbols and historical landmarks. Signs might be used for something more than giving directions or pressing a sale. They could point out the meaning of the scene.”<sup>25</sup>

Closer to home, Inderbir Singh Riar, in his text *Montreal and the Megastructure* evokes architects Michel Lincourt and Harry Parnass’s *Métro Éducation* project developed in 1970 in advance of the coming creation of Université du Québec à Montréal. “The goal was, above all, ‘not to centralize the entire university in an immense building’, instead, it was to initiate ‘a

---

<sup>24</sup> Sanford Kwinter and Daniela Fabricius, “Urbanism : An Archivist's Art ?”, in Rem Koolhaas et al., *Mutations*, Bordeaux, Arc en rêve centre d'architecture, 2000, p.498 (footnote).

<sup>25</sup> Mitchell Schwarzer, *Zoomscape : Architecture in Motion and Media*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2004, p. 105.

system of education, diffusion of information, and culturization through the best possible utilization of *existing urban resources*. These ‘resources’ were found in the ambit of the Underground City.”<sup>26</sup> The plan for Métro Éducation was to use underutilized spaces of the ‘multilevel city’ before developing temporary modules to fill empty lots of the downtown core and to finally move toward the scale of a permanent megastructure that would link and organize sites of learning. “Lincourt and Parnass thus refused the ‘traditional linear organization’ of the city in favor of a ‘superimposed organization’.”<sup>27</sup> The stacking of information along vertical axes seems to clash with Appleyard, Lynch and Myers ‘linear exposition’. It proposes density and complexity as a solution or at least as a device that stimulates (or should we say ‘simulates’?) breaks or shifts.

Lingering a little longer on the experience proposed at Expo, it is interesting to note that the thematic pavilions were and remain among the most ambiguous ones. Developing the notion of ‘phantasmagoria’ in relation a number of pavilions presenting multi-screens displays, Ben Highmore settles on the National Film Board of Canada’s *Labyrinth* as one of the most troubling ones. “The confusion that it seemed to generate will not, now, be seen as a failure to communicate effectively but as a key feature of its phantasmagoric form.”<sup>28</sup> Alongside, Singh Riar recalls Reyner Banham’s interest in Man the Producer pavilion:

Banham refused to read Man the Producer as an institution in which the relations between individuals and technologies were normalized. [...] Man the Producer offered, then, a transitional form. It did little to shape knowledge-power relations typical of world’s fairs – *what* was displayed and *who* viewed it – into a common

---

<sup>26</sup> Inderbir Singh Riar, “Montreal and the Megastructure, ca 1967”, in Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan, eds., *Expo 67, Not Just a Souvenir*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010, p. 202-203.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>28</sup> Ben Highmore, “Phantasmagoria at Expo 67”, in Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan, eds., *Expo 67, Not Just a Souvenir*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010, p. 133.



culture. [...] Instead, this megastructure became a space for ‘*situations construites*’.<sup>29</sup>

The argument here is somewhat similar to Krzysztof Wodiczko’s refutation of Baudrillard’s critique of ‘cyberblitz’.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Highmore and Singh Riar remain more circumspect regarding the liberating power of megastructure machines. Respectively, they ask: “was this phantasmagoria in the service of industrial capitalism [...] or do we catch a glimpse of what it might mean to use phantasmagoric forms against industrial propaganda?”<sup>31</sup> and, “did the notion of a megastructure (or, indeed, Megacity) adequately describe a genuinely public space and a new type of commons? Or did it simply link quasi-public spaces into a larger spectacle of urban life?”<sup>32</sup> Those questions remain open. Once again, *Signage Matrix* seeks to operate within that gap of criticality that sometimes open in plain sight, right in the middle of the city understood as a propaganda machine. Schwarzer, like Banham, Highmore, Singh Riar or Wodiczko, also hints at this possible switching or flipping between spectacle and criticality that happens when media and architecture collide:

Yet another characteristic of the zoomscape is multiplicity. Photography, film, and television reproduce images of buildings indefinitely, and in the process turn architecture into a medium of popular entertainment. In books and museums, theaters and living rooms, people see architecture less as the shaper of hierarchy and class divisions than as the setting for commercial fashions and dramatic situations. As Walter Benjamin argues in his 1933 essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, the motorized duplication of an artwork erases uniqueness in favor of an extended life in images: “By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it

---

<sup>29</sup> Inderbir Singh Riar, “Montreal and the Megastructure, ca 1967”, in Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan, eds., *Expo 67, Not Just a Souvenir*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010, p. 197.

<sup>30</sup> Krzysztof Wodiczko, “Strategies of Public Address : Which Media, Which Publics ?”, in Claire Doherty, ed., *Situation, Documents of Contemporary Art*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2009, p. 124-125.

<sup>31</sup> Ben Highmore, “Phantasmagoria at Expo 67”, in Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan, eds., *Expo 67, Not Just a Souvenir*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010, p. 133.

<sup>32</sup> Inderbir Singh Riar, “Montreal and the Megastructure, ca 1967”, in Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan, eds., *Expo 67, Not Just a Souvenir*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010, p. 205.

reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition.”<sup>33</sup>

Summarizing in a way many of the ideas discussed above around photography and reproduction, performativity and indexicality and history and the digital paradigm, Fabricius and Kwinter come up with a ‘satisficing’ work ethics to ‘probe’ the urban landscape:

Capturing the dynamic picture is thus a function of two postures. The first is to accept the idea that just as a photograph is said to capture an « action », so the task of sending a momentary probe through the contemporary urban archive is believed to yield a snapshot of something true and mobile and invisible to the organic embedded eye. This could be called the ‘bioptic’ approach : the removal of a few cells from an organism through which a far broader set of knowledge of the entire organism can be deduced. The second posture requires one to accept the non-exhaustive nature of both the method and of any result (as in the parable of the three blind men inspecting the elephant, each projecting an absurd animal form from the limited data at hand); it involves accepting the corruption and fugitiveness of the archive itself (thanks to the internet our collective system of memory today more resembles a sewer system into which non-degradable artifacts are indiscriminately thrown, than an engineered “superhighway” on which licensed vehicles and rational, consensus-based trajectories are played out); and finally it involves the faith that the very speed and arbitrariness of the project – performatively conceived – delivers something virtuous that more refined and disciplined eras and methods could not; it places scientific method and political action in the hands of everyone with a phone line and a hard drive. Urbanism is simply no longer a specialist’s task.<sup>34</sup>

Along those lines, *Signage Matrix for Turcot Interchange Refection* aims, between 2009 and 2022, to actualize a project of critical commemoration, notably through a conceptual proposition for a public work and through works on paper and paper-architectures; but also through writing, talking, and circulating information. At the core, it is also inscribed within the longer project of developing series of attempts at figuring out some of the ‘semiotics of the built world’. It tries to do that through an iconoclastic treatment of information that could bring to mind Bruno Latour’s ‘iconoclasm of type B’, the category of iconoclasm that argues for a saturated image-flow as

---

<sup>33</sup> Mitchell Schwarzer, *Zoomscape : Architecture in Motion and Media*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2004, p. 24.

<sup>34</sup> Sanford Kwinter and Daniela Fabricus, “Urbanism : An Archivist's Art ?”, Rem Koolhaas et al., *Mutations*, Bordeaux, Arc en rêve centre d'architecture, 2000, p.502.

opposed to a ‘freeze-frame’ iconophilia.<sup>35</sup> It tries to do so through performative strategies, be it the performance of juggling, in the print studio, the many pages of the portfolio, which distances that activity from a linear production chain; the performance of the work pointing, indexing and vectorializing a site, a situation, a possibility; or the performance of a distracted audience/public under a layered configuration of information. It tries to do so through a self-reflexivity of interconnections, intersections, and interfaces that simultaneously imbricate and unhinge the Turcot Interchange within/from sets of multiple histories.

---

<sup>35</sup> Bruno Latour, “What is iconoclash ? or Is there a world beyond the image wars ?”, in Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Iconoclash, Beyond the Image-Wars in Science, Religion and Art*, Karlsruhe and Cambridge, ZKM and MIT Press, 2002, p. 27-28.

## Bibliography

### Articles and short texts

DOANE, Mary Ann, "Indexicality : Trace and Sign : Introduction", *Differences : A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Volume 18, Number 1, 2007.

Échangeur Turcot, *Dossier de Presse*, [available through the research center at Canadian Center for Architecture, Montreal].

HIGHMORE, Ben, "Phantasmagoria at Expo 67", in Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan, eds., *Expo 67, Not Just a Souvenir*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010.

KWINTER, Sanford and Daniela Fabricus, "Urbanism : An Archivist's Art ?", Rem Koolhaas et al., *Mutations*, Bordeaux, Arc en rêve centre d'architecture, 2000.

LATOURL, Bruno, "What is iconoclasm ? or Is there a world beyond the image wars ?", in Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Iconoclasm, Beyond the Image-Wars in Science, Religion and Art*, Karlsruhe and Cambridge, ZKM and MIT Press, 2002.

RICHMAN KENNEALLY, Rhona and Johanne Sloan, "Introduction : Dusting Off the Souvenir", in Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan, eds., *Expo 67, Not Just a Souvenir*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010.

SINGH RIAR, Inderbir, "Montreal and the Megastructure, ca 1967", in Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan, eds., *Expo 67, Not Just a Souvenir*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010.

WARK, Mckenzie, "Telegram from Nowhere", Rem Koolhaas et al., *Mutations*, Bordeaux, Arc en rêve centre d'architecture, 2000.

WODICZKO, Krysstof, "Strategies of Public Address : Which Media, Which Publics ?", in Claire Doherty, ed., *Situation, Documents of Contemporary Art*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2009.

### Publications

BOURRIAUD, Nicolas, *Radicant, Pour une esthétique de la globalisation*, Paris, Denoël, 2009.

GIBSON, William, *Spook Country*, New York, Berkley, 2007.

LORTIE, André, ed., *Les années 60, Montréal voit grand*, Montreal, Centre Canadien d'architecture, 2004.

SCHWARZER, Mitchell, *Zoomscape : Architecture in Motion and Media*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2004.

### Web

GRAVEL, Alain Gravel and Marie-Maude Denis, "L'interruption de la filature d'un ex-dirigeant de la FTQ-Construction soulève des questions", Radio-Canada, August 23 2012, [online].

[<http://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelles/societe/2012/08/08/004-filature-eddy-brandone.shtml>] [11/08/2014].

LA PRESSE, « Reconstruction de l'échangeur Turcot », Dossiers, [online]. [[www.lapresse.ca/dossiers/reconstruction-de-lechangeur-turcot](http://www.lapresse.ca/dossiers/reconstruction-de-lechangeur-turcot)] [05/10/2013].

MINISTÈRE DES TRANSPORTS DU QUÉBEC, "Présentation modélisée du projet Turcot", [online]. [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5fAoSc-Uhw>] [11/11/2014].

MINISTÈRE DES TRANSPORTS DU QUÉBEC, Turcot, [online]. [[www.turcot.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.turcot.gouv.qc.ca)] [05/10/2013].

MOBILISATION TURCOT, « MTQ project » and « Impacts », [online]. [[turcot.info/en](http://turcot.info/en)] [05/11/2013].

MYLES, Brian, "Julie Boulet nie avoir touché au financement", *Le Devoir*, 15 mai 2014, [online]. [<http://www.ledevoir.com/politique/quebec/408333/commission-charbonneau-julie-boulet-nie-avoir-touche-au-financement>] [11/08/2014].

NOËL, André, "Le ministre Pierre Laporte était sur écoute, révèle un livre", *La Presse*, October 2 2010. [online]. [<http://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/crise-doctobre/201010/02/01-4328933-le-ministre-pierre-laporte-etait-sur-ecoute-revele-un-livre.php>] [11/07/2014].