



Close Looking and the Workings of the World: Drawing, Geography, and Everyday Life

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Abstract

Decolonial Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (2021a) believed that space had become so compressed under capitalism that vast human networks run through even the most remote villages. As such, he believed that by looking closely at one's own place, one could come to know the workings of the wider world. What can place-based drawing reveal about the relationship between everyday lived experiences and larger forces that shape urban environments? How might sustained observation through drawing make visible the interaction between local particularities and global spatial processes? This paper addresses these questions by reflecting on drawings conducted for two place-based, open-ended artmaking projects in downtown Montréal, Québec, Canada. Informed by dialectical spatial theory, drawing-as-research, and applying fieldwork principles to built spaces, we focused our artmaking both within and at the border of two neighborhoods with stark class differences—The Shaughnessy Village, a multi-cultural, dense neighborhood, and Westmount, an upper-class, low-density independent urban enclave. By analyzing several drawings made in the context of this research and deducing four themes— Relational attachments: Horizontalities and situated perception; Daily rhythm through the interplay of objects and actions; Spatial restructuring and accumulated texture; And visible power dynamics in space—this paper examines the concrete, embodied, and abstract spatial insights this work revealed about urban use. Through this work, we argue that drawing in situ can extend beyond concrete and steel to provide insight into spatial networks that influence everyday life.

Keywords

Arts-Based Research; Drawing-as-Research; Fieldwork; Geography; Milton Santos; Place-Based Practice.

1. Introduction

Decolonial Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (2017; 2021a; 2021b) argued that under globalization, spaces have become compressed through global networks of capital, technology, labour, and information. These networks are so totalizing that they permeate even the most remote places. For Santos, space is produced

through the interaction of material infrastructures, human action, and global forces intersecting within localities. These forces shape spaces, which in turn shape everyday life. As such, he believed that these networks were so ingrained in daily life that we could come to know the workings of the world by looking closely at our surroundings (2021a).

What would it mean to take up this provocation through place-based drawing? While drawing has long been recognized within the subjective epistemologies of arts-based research as a means of reflection, observation, and knowledge generation (Chen, 2026; Leavy, 2020), our focus is squarely constructionist (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Ward, Hoare, & Gott, 2015), believing that we can develop shared meaning about the world through sharing individual interpretations. We ask: What can place-based drawing reveal about the relationship between everyday lived experiences and larger forces that shape urban environments? How might sustained observation through drawing make visible the interaction between local particularities and global spatial processes?

To address these questions, we extend Santos's theory of spatial production into dialogue with place-based drawing practices to argue that drawing can transcend representation to become a form of spatial inquiry that can make visible the interaction between lived experience and global networks. Drawing from observation in situ requires sustained engagement with space, which can bring an attentiveness to material conditions, social relationships, and spatial uses that might go unnoticed by quickly snapping photographs or simply walking around. Building on constructionism, however, we acknowledge that positionality is a critical component of how drawings generate insights and situate our own practices and associations with the space. In other words, we contend that drawing can reveal the structural forces of the world *from* our own situated perspectives.

The paper unfolds first by sharing our positionalities and the projects that these drawings derived from. In section 2, we introduce Santos's spatial theory, contend with what it means for drawing, and conclude with a spatial model for drawing practice integrative of his spatial theories. In section 3, we situate our sites and discuss four themes that emerged from making, sharing drawings, anecdotes, and insights from our individual making. We conclude by re-iterating our argument that drawing as a modality revealed things that other forms of spatial analysis could not.

1.1 Positionality and Projects

This paper came out of two projects that invited seven artist-researchers to engage in open-ended artmaking in downtown Montréal, Québec, Canada from 2024-2026. Building on co-author David LeRue's doctoral dissertation that bridged personal making with art teaching in place (LeRue, 2024) and painting as a method for capturing fieldnotes (2026), this research examined the relationship between open-ended making, spatial insights, and art teaching, the latter of which invites others into similar dialogues with space and place. This places the position of the artist-teacher as epistemologically distinct, thinking through ways of transferring practice from teacher to student.

While this dialogue does not feature heavily here, it informs the positionality of the research team. Contributors are accustomed to moving between making and reflection, and to articulating how insights generated from making can be shared through teaching. This orientation shaped the research process, grounding it in the constructivist, dialogic relationship between observation, interpretation, and communication that is central to both artistic and educational practice. The works here were created with the freedom to make anything, so long as it directly related to the space and was the product of embodied experience. However, almost all the works from the research team took up drawing, largely for its portability and ease of use.

2. Theorizing Drawing Practice

2.1 Milton Santos and the Production of Space

Brazilian geographer Milton Santos was active in the mid 20th century while the Global South, after centuries of colonial subjugation, was subjected to globalization by the Global North (2017). As such, he developed a theory of globalization *from* the perspective of the developing world, who were often the subject rather than the purveyors of globalization theories. He recognized globalization as having three distinct faces (Santos, 2017). The first saw globalization as fable, meaning a hegemonic narrative told by northern countries that portrayed globalization as a force for

interconnection and global inclusion. The second saw globalization as perversity, recognizing the lived reality of globalization by the global south that was marked by inequality, technocratic control, and the erosion of local particularities through economic domination. The third was globalization as it can be: a global force for poverty reduction, egalitarian connections, and emancipation.

Santos's system was deeply concerned with how global systems reorganized everyday life and became embedded in local environments. He built on Marxist geography (Lefebvre, 1991) and actor network theory (Latour, 2005) to contend that spaces are systems of objects and actions (2017; 2021a). Objects are the historically situated material and infrastructural elements within space, including land, large buildings and technology. Actions are what give meaning and use to these objects, including everyday practices such as movement, consumption, and social interaction, as well as institutional and corporate interventions that impose spatial organization from above. The interplay between objects and actions come together in everyday life through used space, where global structures interact with daily practices.

Within this system, actions are what define space and separate it from landscape, the latter of which is understood as the material residue of past actions, or what Santos called "accumulated history" (2021a, p. 65). He illustrates the distinction between space and landscape through the example of a bomb being developed by the CIA in the 1960s that would vaporize people and leave infrastructure intact (2021a). Upon detonation, these spaces would immediately be relegated to landscape because they no longer have humans to act upon them, rendering them relics of a dead time that is backward looking. Dead time as landscape can also be found within spaces, with Santos (2021a) referring to unused objects from the past as spatial texture. Whereas a space like a newly built suburb would have little texture, spaces like the Shaughnessy Village and Westmount are hundreds of years old and components have been redeveloped several times. This definition of landscape does differ from conceptions of landscape as image, such as in the work of art historian WJT Mitchell (2002) and

in landscape theory, which discusses the historic power that landscape images have had over discourses of nationalism and colonialism. However, for artistic spatial practice, it does provide a workable way to distinguish between landscape presented as a dialogue with visual culture and motifs, and spatial engagements as ongoing, lived processes.

This system is best distilled in the quote 'Each place is, in its own way, the world' (p. 226). By this, he meant that the objects and actions that produce space have become so intertwined under globalization that the global can be encountered everywhere (Santos, 2021a viz de Souza, 1995). He theorized this intertwining through the concepts of verticalities and horizontalities (2017). Verticalities refer to top-down forces imposed on space, such as state policies, land-use rules, development from multinational corporations, and technology and infrastructures that organize space according to their own totalizing logics. Horizontalities consist of localized relationships, including cultural practices, social solidarity networks, and ways of life that shape local institutions, languages, and daily life. Horizontalities and verticalities come together in used space, which are the everyday scenarios where local particularities and global forces conjoin to produce daily life. Within used space, abstract global forces become concrete and are negotiated within every day, particular cultural practices. By engaging the meditative aspects of drawing in direct engagement with space, we contend that we can become attuned to the ways that global forces manifest in local particularities. But how would this process work?

2.2 Spatial Standardization in Everyday Life

Integrating global perspectives into observations of local problems is central to how drawing can extend beyond immediate perception. For example, phenomena such as gentrification are often framed as discrete, site-specific problems that are told as localized stories of political and developer malfeasance (Harvey, 2012). However, what we call gentrification, and its subsequent displacement and re-configuring of neighborhoods is occurring in cities worldwide, furthering local and global inequalities brought on by trends of increasing focus on land as an

investment vehicle (Rolnik, 2019). As such, markers of gentrification, such as signals of affluence through slick-looking storefronts, standardized design styles, and infrastructures for affluent tourists (Speake, Kennedy & Love, 2023) can be read against local textures but are also a reminder of the global forces that shape them.

Global forces also transcend particular elements to influence larger spatial designs. Work, transit, and consumer environments increasingly follow repeatable design logics, producing spaces oriented toward efficiency, circulation, and predictable use. French anthropologist Marc Augé (1995) theorized these environments as non-places, which are spaces that prioritize specific uses

and appear strikingly similar across different geographic contexts. In non-places, users generally engage the space for its functionality and for specific movement, such as with airports and train stations for travel, or malls and hotels designed with transactional uses and standardized aesthetics. In the Shaughnessy Village, recent renovation projects have adopted the logics of non-places, co-existing alongside local texture. This includes renovations of the Montréal Forum and Alexis Nihon Mall, which have borrowed motifs of non-places to encourage movement and reduce loitering (see Figure 1). These spaces are also nodes in the neighborhood, where traffic is facilitated in and out by metro lines and busses, and occupying a space central to street traffic.



Figure 1. Alexis Nihon Mall drawing by Song.

Standardized spatial logics experienced on the horizontal plane provide rich texture to think through spatial typologies and how they circulate globally. As spaces standardize, they lose local texture and the particularities of place but also make visible how global networks are apparent in each area. One example of this proliferation is the third wave café, which is defined by Global norms for coffee quality, entrepreneurial branding, and austere interior aesthetics (Manzo, 2015). Highlighting this contrast, LeRue recalls encountering such a café in Paris, after moving through the city's historic streets and distinct architectural textures. The café had an austere, concrete, industrial aesthetic, with travel books on the wall and marble countertops that felt more at home in a warehouse condominium than in a central Parisian arrondissement. But these cafés and their spatial logics are repeated on every continent, highlighting the ways globalized spatial logics can co-exist alongside horizontal social lines. If such dynamics can be observed in everyday spaces, the question becomes how they can be methodologically engaged through practice.

2.3 Drawing as Spatial Method

The close-looking required of drawing spaces from observation offers a method for perceiving these dynamics as they unfold in everyday life. Urban designer Mike Buddulph (2014) observed that "Drawing and understanding are inextricably linked," offering a way to understand how spaces are formed, structured, and experienced. Understanding here, according to art educator Lucy Lyons (2012), is rooted in our subjective experiences that are facilitated through embodied perception. Reflecting on work she conducted with participants who were using drawing to understand medical research, Lyons argued that the knowledge generated from drawing is always situated in our own perceptions, noting that her participants each had different things they wanted to understand. In our own research team, we all brought unique spatial relationships (that we partially address in 3.2) that informed our understanding and subsequent spatial analysis.

Embodied engagement within lived space meant that horizontal and vertical elements were navigated through

first-hand experience. Unlike photography, which can sometimes produce an *interpassive* (Pfaller, 2017) relationship where the act of 'seeing' is delegated to the camera, drawing necessitates embodied, sustained engagement. By embodied, we mean that our physical bodies occupy the space and are exposed to the sensory elements—the noise, smells, and flows of traffic and people—that represent spatial actions. Further to this point, we must physically enter the space, travelling from our homes or work to draw. Drawing fosters sustained engagement in that it slows perception, bringing hand and eye together which fosters attentiveness to form, material, and context. At its best, this can produce a meditative flow-state where hand and eye work closely together (Edwards, 2008). This embodied practice enables the researcher to register not only what is present in space but become attuned to spatial rhythms in everyday life.

The embodied, close-looking drawing in used space facilitated direct experience with the tensions between horizontal and vertical forces. Indeed, navigating transit systems, sitting in malls, or near parks could not help but reveal the ways that spaces were used and managed. Geographer Laura Anatona (2019) argued that drawing from life can reveal the socio-spatial construction of knowledge and make perceptible the power relationships embedded within the built environment. For us, drawing began to function as an in-situ spatial analysis, where ideas about space came as we drew, creating a direct relationship between making, thinking, and spatial theorizing. In the context of the research, the drawings were not merely illustrations or a record of appearance, but a record of perception. The completed works become part of a mosaic of encounters documented in graphite and line that gave a wider view to our sites.

2.4 Model of Spatial Drawing Practice

These methodological claims are summarized in our model for spatial drawing (see Figure 2). This model depicts a drawing framed in a thumbnail sketch, with a red line cutting through it. The frame represents the used spaces we see in everyday life, with verticalities

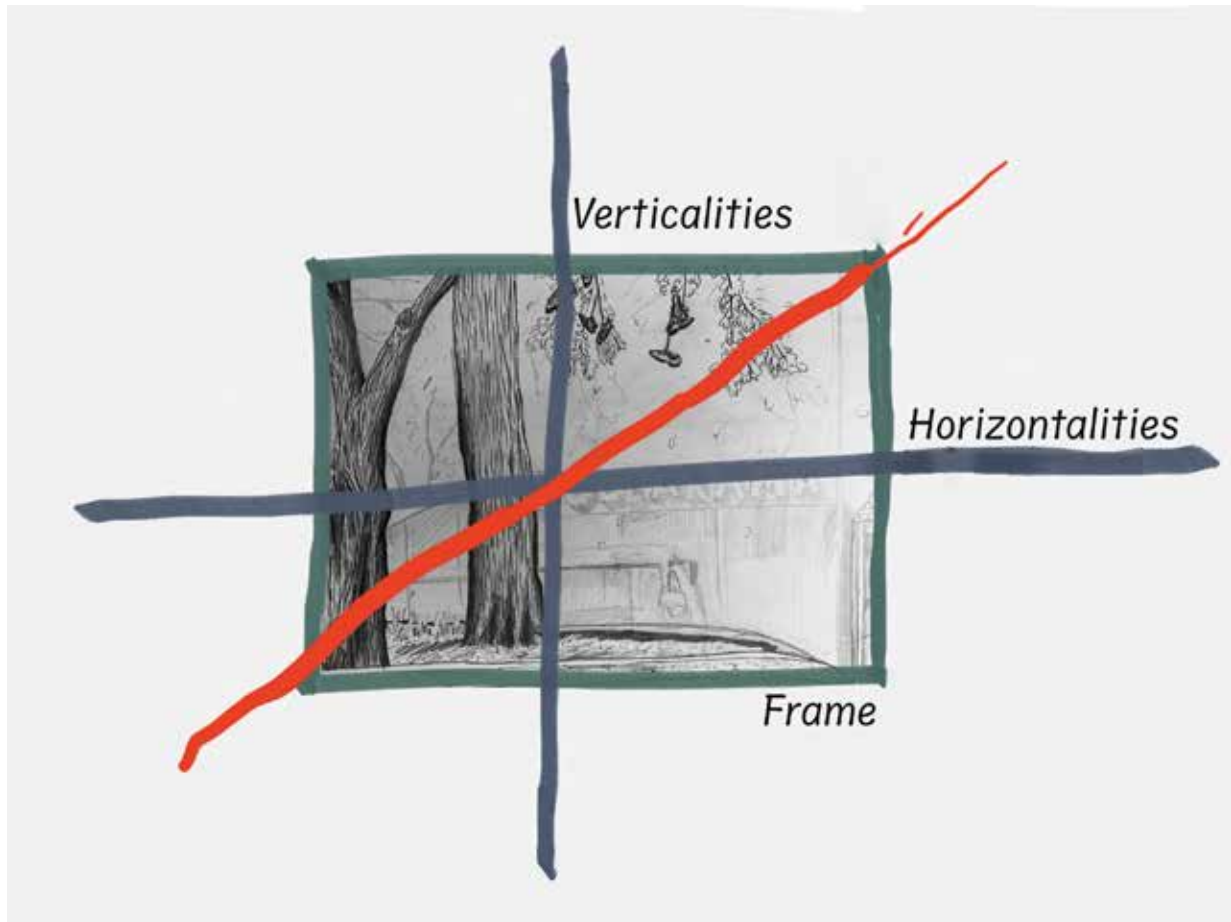


Figure 2. Model of spatial drawing practice. Model by LeRue, drawing by Nick Nylen.

and horizontalities intersecting within the frame. This represents the encounter with used space captured through the drawing. The red line cutting across the image is temporality, which recognizes that this drawing is not only capturing a space on a specific date at a specific time of day, but that the drawing itself suddenly becomes temporally bounded. This recognizes that the meaning of the drawing will evolve on the date of its creation, the next month, and ten years later, tied to the ongoing and evolving interpretations as the space itself.

We trust that the theories of drawings and space laid out in section 2 adequately contextualize this model and provide a framework for understanding how drawing can apprehend the layered dynamics of ongoing spatial forces. In the following section, we introduce the site of

our research in depth, before examining the themes that emerged from producing drawings produced in situ to explore how these spatial dynamics became perceptible through sustained observation and making.

3. Drawing as Spatial Analysis in Practice

3.1 Situating our Sites

The Shaughnessy Village is one of Montreal's most densely populated neighbourhoods, home to a university campus, colleges, shopping malls, museums, and residential housing. As a central neighborhood in Montreal's downtown area, thousands of individuals commute to and from the Shaughnessy village daily, while inhabitants come from various cultural origins and social classes including francophone, anglophone, and immigrant

communities. The village's architecture is varied, containing glass skyscrapers with expensive penthouses and old, Victorian-era Greystones. Family-run shops and restaurants sit beside world-wide chains and global offices. These elements make this neighborhood a one-of-a-kind collage of Montreal's multicultural milieu. There are a handful of greenspaces scattered throughout the neighborhood that are heavily used and sit at the intersection of busy streets. Westmount, meanwhile, is known as one of the most prestigious neighborhoods in Montreal that is largely upper-class, anglophone, and residential. There are a few busy shopping districts and thoroughways, but residential streets are tranquil and secluded, with large parks, single family homes with manicured lawns, and tree-lined sidewalks that shelter noise and provide ample greenery. The demeanour of locals appeared to be friendlier and low-key. While Shaughnessy is a fast-paced environment marked by movement, Westmount has many retirees, dog-walkers, and daycare / school groups present through the day that seem to enjoy the space in a more deliberate way.

Of note is how our research on the border has narrowed on Atwater Avenue, which divides the neighborhoods. Along this street, a park named Square Cabot, Alexis Nihon Mall, two major libraries, a metro station, and a renovated hockey arena (now a theatre and mixed-use site) facilitate traffic between these neighborhoods. Despite their stark differences, we have found that the border gently weaves one neighborhood into the other, negating any stark divisions. This is in contrast to other Montréal neighborhoods, such as the border between Town Mount Royal, another upper-class, independent urban enclave, and Parc Extension, a largely immigrant and working-class neighborhood, which is divided by a large, shrubbed-over fence. We found the relationship between Shaughnessy and Westmount to be relatively harmonious, with movement unimpeded.

3.2 Relational Attachments: Horizontalities and Situated Perception

A core theme from this work was the relational attachments that each researcher brought to the spaces, which informed how we interpreted spatial dynamics. Build-

ing on Anatona's (2019) argument that drawing in place reminds us of memories and events, we found that we were consistently drawing on our experiences in these spaces. Each member of the research team engaged the Shaughnessy Village regularly due to the proximity of our home institution, yet from distinct positionalities. LeRue, who had lived in Montreal for a decade, initially lived in the neighborhood as a university student, living in a tight bubble between his home, the university, and nearby services. Yet, negative housing experiences—concurrently contracting bedbugs, mold, cockroaches, and a cranky landlord! —led him to move to another area and informed a negative perception of the neighborhood. Yet, daily commuting retained an ongoing relationship to the space. Co-author Keyiana Marques, by contrast, had engaged the neighborhood weekly since childhood, using it as a student, commuter, and consumer of local businesses, galleries, and museums at different stages of life. This long-term engagement brought layered meanings to the research. Meanwhile, co-author Sa Eun Song approached the neighborhood as a recent newcomer to Montréal from Toronto and as an immigrant from South Korea, which brought a fresh perspective beyond LeRue and Marques's more longstanding spatial associations.

Our differing relationships produced distinct readings of the same space. Drawing as a slow-looking methodology disrupted our habits and invited our relational attachments to inform the work (Biddulph, 2014). For LeRue and Marques in particular, drawing interrupted their instrumental associations with the space and instead centered sensory and material awareness. Buildings and objects that previously receded into the background became easier to observe, revealing several examples of their rich textures, histories, and ongoing spatial adaptations embedded in the urban fabric. Song's positionality meant that drawing foregrounded different dimensions, such as her observation of the Shaughnessy Village's multicultural ethnic composition. She became particularly aware of the East Asian restaurants and institutions that resonated with her own South Korean background, which helped her feel more connected to the space as an outsider. Her drawings incorporated found materials, such as Korean newspapers and discarded cardboard that

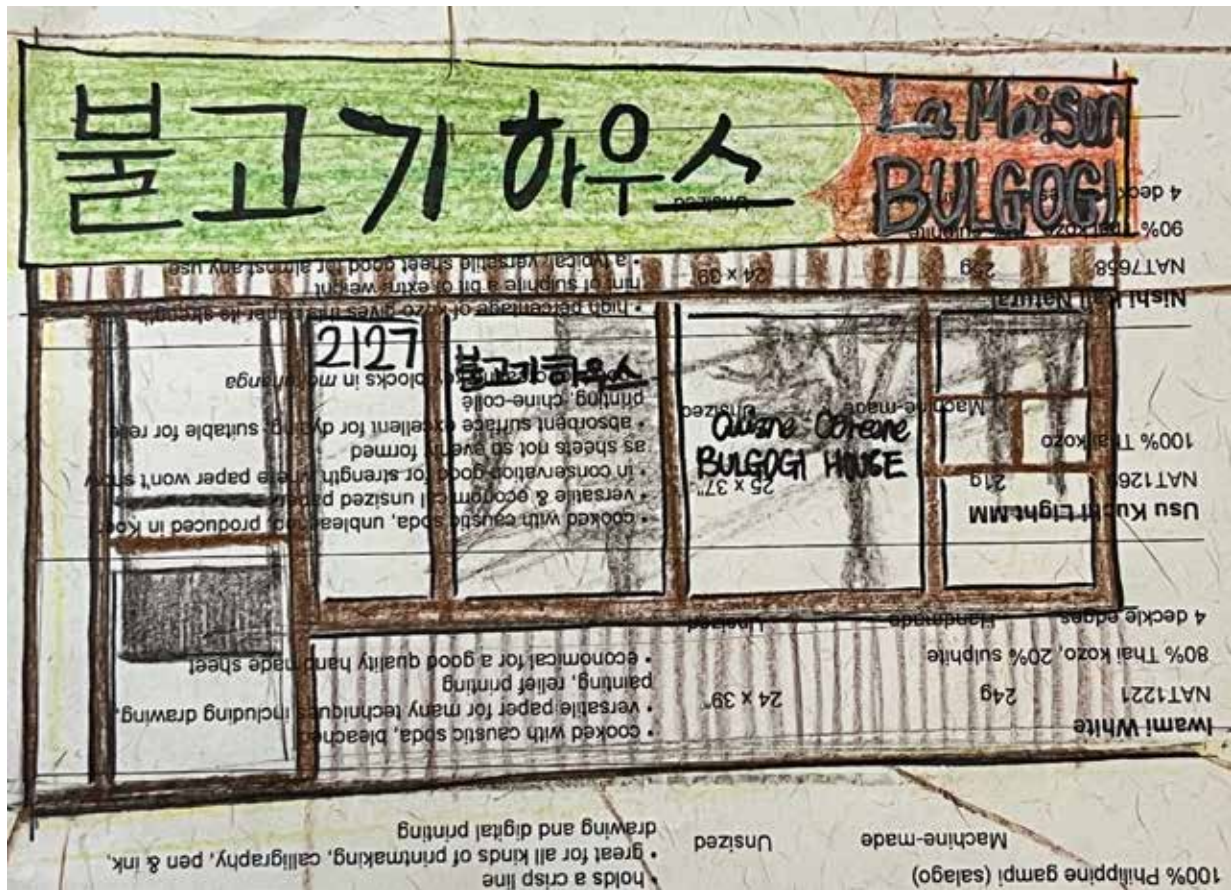


Figure 3. Multicultural restaurants in Shaughnessy Village on newspaper, by Song.

captured personal resonances and the neighborhoods' multicultural character (see Figure 3). She noted that the neighborhood seemed to accommodate continuous movement and transition, with numerous hotels, vacant buildings, and construction sites suggesting the area invited activities such as drawing—which other team members noted was not always welcome in the upper-class, neighboring Westmount! This foregrounds that drawing in space is a relational process where memory, perception and place become visible to the researcher.

3.3 Daily Rhythm through the interplay of Objects and Actions

The Shaughnessy Village's central location in Montréal meant that we observed users and inhabitants were constantly in motion, which makes Santos's (2017; 2021a) concept of space as a system of objects and actions visi-

ble. The Shaughnessy Village's streets, storefronts, housing, and infrastructure provide a relatively stable space (set of objects) that are continually used through flows of people, seasonal rhythms, and patterns of use. Many drawings revealed seasonal variation, like how sketching in winter made us draw faster. Seasonality also recurred in the works through spatial use. Snowbanks turned into terraces with happy diners and drinkers, vegetation turned lush green, and parks went from underused, barren spaces to filled with school groups, sunbathers, and coordinated activities. Smaller cycles included how on garbage day, the streets would be lined up with trash bags and boxes, often without bins to contain them (see Figure 4), and the ever-evolving construction landscape, which directed foot and vehicle traffic in ever-evolving ways.



Figure 4. Street view of boxes on garbage day in Shaughnessy Village, by Song.



Figure 5. Cones directing traffic to one lane by Caitlin Dix.

The objects and actions we observed were also a reminder of geographical interconnections. Marques's drawing of Russell Beverly Antiques (see Figure 6) was a static, localized building whose interior was decorated with objects from around the world, including trinkets, jewelry, furniture, and dishware, which moved through vast global networks and temporal periods to concentrate within its walls. Drawing on the dialogue of non-place (Augé, 1995) and the aesthetics of gentrification (Speake et al., 2023), we found that recent re-developments of Alexis Nihon

Mall and the Forum contributed to the erasure of local texture, providing standardized spaces that seemed aimed to facilitate and direct movement. The food court at the mall was, until recently, a dated dining area full of seating where nearby students would lounge between classes. The updated aesthetic, now called BONAP, includes less seating, fewer local restaurants, and cues to move along, such as workers rapidly cleaning tables behind patrons, uncomfortable chairs, and a gray aesthetic that resembles something closer to an airport than a restaurant.



Figure 6. Russell Beverly Antiques, by Marques

Embedded drawing revealed the ways that actions upon the neighborhood cause continuous shifts, and the ways that lived space interacts with global networks. Despite the space largely being designed to be *moved through*, drawing helped us to slow down and attune our perceptions to the rhythms of everyday life. Our own situated experiences thus provided a rounded way to conceptualize our embedded experiences and provide deeper insights than we may have arrived at individually.

3.4 Spatial Restructuring and Accumulated Texture

Looking closely began to reveal the ways that space was being restructured, showing how new developments were integrating (or not) into the texture of daily life in

used space. In Montréal, preservation activists have inspired laws that force developers to retain building exteriors through subsequent redevelopments, which helps the city retain a diverse architectural ecosystem. Marques observed these textures in Sparta Poulet (see Figure 7), a chicken restaurant that has been a mainstay in the Shaughnessy Village since 2005 operating out of a Victorian building. While the façade of the building is 100+ years old, it is presently wedged between office buildings and a university, decoupled from its original context. Our research team noted several re-purposed architectures, including a car dealership in an old office building, a former church that hosts a circus school, and the aforementioned Montréal forum.



Figure 7. Sparta Poulet (intervention after the fact) by Marques.



Figure 8. The juxtaposition of older architecture with high-rise developments, by Amelie Lillethun.

The Shaughnessy Village's mishmash of architectures makes it a target for redevelopment projects. While Montréal neighborhoods like the Plateau, Le Sud-Ouest, and Mile End are kept architecturally consistent through development plans, the Shaughnessy Village has had so many uses over the years that there is no consistent char-

acter to protect. Old houses sit next to thirty story condominiums, parks, and stadiums. New developments, like the condominium that sits on the site of the former Montréal Children's Hospital, kept an administrative building while erecting non-descript skyscrapers around it (See Figure 8). Analyzing this drawing, we realized that the building



Figures 9-11. Differences between the current view and Google Maps in Shaughnessy Village, by Song.

stands out now amid the skyscrapers, but this is because the context itself changed. Meanwhile, the prevalence of ongoing construction revealed how spatial development is an ongoing process. Building on our discussion about cones and signs blocking foot and vehicle traffic,

walking through neighborhood often requires navigating detours. Song, as an outsider, noticed that spatial routes were so infrequent that digital maps were not updated often enough to provide a clear path through the neighborhood, which interfered with getting to sites to draw.



Figure 12: A half-burned block, by Song.

Reflecting on these drawings, we noticed that the temporary inconvenience of cones was in conjunction with more permanently changing landscapes. Building on geographer Sage Brice (2017), drawing as fieldwork reveals space's ongoing, processual nature. The ongoing construction (captured by Song in Figures 9-11)—and how much the construction recurred in our drawings—was a reminder of how the temporary the brick, mortar, and steel of a city really is. By looking backwards at images from Google Maps, we could track changes over time and noticed that main thoroughfares were unrecognizable from 10 years prior. The pace of development made it more surprising that many sites sat derelict, including half of a city block that had burned down last summer that is awaiting redevelopment (see Figure 12). Referring to the model for drawing (see Figure 2), the red line representing temporality helps situate the pace of change.

3.5 Visible Power Dynamics in Space

The ongoing restructuring of space also revealed many local power dynamics, and how they connect to larger structural forces. Within Santos's (2017) conception of horizontalities and verticalities, he argued that it is those with power who facilitate the vertical imposition onto localities. These dynamics became visible when comparing drawings of construction made between Shaughnessy and Westmount. Song observed that in the Shaughnessy Village, construction was pervasive, involving buildings and roadwork, while in Westmount, construction seemed more localized in private activities such as landscaping, home repairs such as stairs and tiling, and things like park maintenance. Westmount appeared visually tranquil and well-maintained, and most public spaces were unused. Most of the visible people were construction or landscaping workers maintaining private residences. Commercial



Figures 13-14. Pet accessory shop, restaurant, and interior design store in Westmount, by Song.

establishments were limited and mostly consisted of pet accessory shops, interior design stores, bakeries, and restaurants (see Figures 13-14). Despite the well-maintained parks and renovated houses, there was little visible everyday activity. While we were discussing the strange atmosphere of Westmount, we also noted the juxtaposition of old and new buildings, including how new high-rise developments have been constructed behind historical structures.

The Atwater area—which is at the border of these neighborhoods but within the Shaughnessy village—revealed a dense interplay of spatial power relations. Square Cabot, adjacent to the Atwater Metro station, was occupied in all seasons by unhoused people due to a nearby soup kitchen (see Figure 15). This dynamic was in tension with the adjacent Alexis Nihon Mall, whose recent renovations project luxury, and a contrasting logic of circulation, consumption, and controlled use. Rather than reading these conditions as isolated, redevelopments at the mall seem to be imposing spatial regimes that restrict use. These spatial contrasts make legible the way spatial actions, social relations, and spatial redevelopment seem to be in dialogue in everyday spatial use. These spaces were thus not neutral backdrops, but contested sites where uneven power relations were affirmed through space.

4. Conclusion

This paper has argued that close looking through drawing can function as a rigorous mode of spatial inquiry, capable of revealing how everyday environments are entangled with broader global forces. By bringing Santos's concepts of horizontalities, verticalities, and used space into dialogue with arts-based research, we have shown that observational drawing does not merely represent space, but actively generates knowledge about the relationships between objects, actions, and accumulated spatial textures. This work contributes to research on drawing by positioning in-situ practices as a form of fieldwork, where spatial analysis emerges during the act of making itself and on subsequent reflection about the work. Unlike other forms of recording space like photography, drawing slows perception and embeds the researcher within the temporal and sensory conditions of place, which provide one way of making spatial dynamics visible.

These findings suggest that the global can be encountered within the local, while demonstrating that drawing provides a distinctive means through which these connections can be sensed, interpreted, and made knowable, particularly in relation to processes of urban transformation. Our constructivist framing foregrounds that the ways spaces are interpreted through drawing are indeed situated within our own perspectives and intellectual tilts. But it also offers a way to extend outward into larger global systems that are visible in horizontal locales. In this view we argue that drawing is not simply a reflective practice, but an analytical one that makes the spatial workings of the world perceptible through situated, embodied engagement.

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Figure 15. Traces of spatial use, by Song.

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