

LIERRE SUR PIERRE (2009), Geneviève Cadieux

This is the fifth stop of the Public Art, Nature and the City tour.

Bouncing light into the busy intersection of Guy Street and De Maisonneuve Boulevard is Geneviève Cadieux's 550 square foot work, *Lierre sur pierre* (Ivy on stone). With its mirror finish in anodized steel, the artwork reflects the buildings, traffic and passersby. While the work's title describes the ivy creeping up the side of the building, it also evokes an image of the vine-covered façades of elite educational institutions. Known as the Ivy League, the age and stature of these institutions is implied by accrued vine growth. Concordia is a much younger institution than some of its counterparts. And with its location in the urban core, the buildings lack this kind of vegetation — especially a building like the John Molson building, which was constructed as recently as 2011.

We might also consider Concordia's founding principle as a "university of the people." Established in 1974, Concordia was designed to be accessible to a working class, urban population. The title of Cadieux's work therefore asserts Concordia's place in higher education with a tinge of irony. But it also acknowledges Concordia's unique and contemporary heritage, one that emphasizes accessibility and diversity. Here, reflection is both literal and symbolic: the polished surface speaks to Concordia's relationship with the broader Montreal community, reflecting the dense corridor of the Quartier Concordia. If you can, look at the piece or imagine it. If you are able to move back and forth, you will notice a change in what the work reflects, creating a sense of movement in the piece as the light refracts

A professor in the Department of Photography at Concordia, Cadieux was born in 1955 in Montreal and educated at the University of Ottawa. Her work has been shown in many international exhibitions, including representing Canada at the 19th Biennale de Sao Paulo. Cadieux participated in the Montreal Biennial in 1986, '87 and 2000 at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, which also mounted a retrospective of her work in 1993. In 1990, Cadieux represented Canada in Venice at the Canadian pavilion with her work, *La Fêlure, au coeur des corps*. In her photographic work, Cadieux often plays with figuration and abstraction through scale — for instance, by pairing magnified, intimate images of skin with sublime landscapes.

In her public art works, Cadieux often draws on established elements of her photography practice, while translating them into new materials. For example, a public artwork in a Paris metro tunnel presents a photorealistic image of a pair of lips in mosaic form. From afar, the image might read simply as a photographic print, but up close the image recedes into colourful and textural abstraction. Why might Cadieux choose to interpret her photographic concepts into other materials for public artworks? Could this tell us something about how the artist conceives of a public artwork? Do you think she views public art differently than art that is destined for galleries or museums?

When a work of art will be permanently installed in a public space, there are practical matters to consider, such as a material's durability, or how feasible the construction might be. But there are also aesthetic and conceptual considerations. For instance, photographs in a museum space read differently than photographs installed on a building's façade, where they enter a busy visual conversation with signs, architecture and billboards.

While *Lierre sur pierre* represents a material departure from Cadieux's larger body of work, the artwork's play with scale and its engagement with light, projection and reflection — key photographic elements — shows continuity in Cadieux's oeuvre. Mirrored material also echoes conceptual themes in Cadieux's photographic work, which often "explores the emotional implications of acts of looking and being looked at."

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