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Winter Drawings on the Université de Montréal Campus

Nicole Valois

Abstract

These sketches, drawn from my work-place, show the area around the Université de Montréal environmental design faculty in winter. From the windows where I drew them (sheltering from the cold), we see the surrounding landscape, as well as the mountain in the distance, through the leafless trees. These drawings, in black and gold ink and watercolor, evoke, on a small scale, the connections between the city and the landscape of the mountain – Mount Royal, the emblem of Montréal. Like landscape paintings with multiple grounds, they speak of the public space, the winter vegetation with its mesh of branches and the icons of Montréal.



1.

The sky is grey and the air, very cold. The hard, crystalline snow mounds around the foot of the trees and blankets the lawn. The concrete paths blend into the tones of the tree branches, leading the way to the university's main pavilion, an important landmark in the city, perched high on the flank of Mount Royal.



2.

Seen from above, the garden of the environmental design faculty nestles in the heart of the campus, its usual green bower stark and leafless at winter's end.



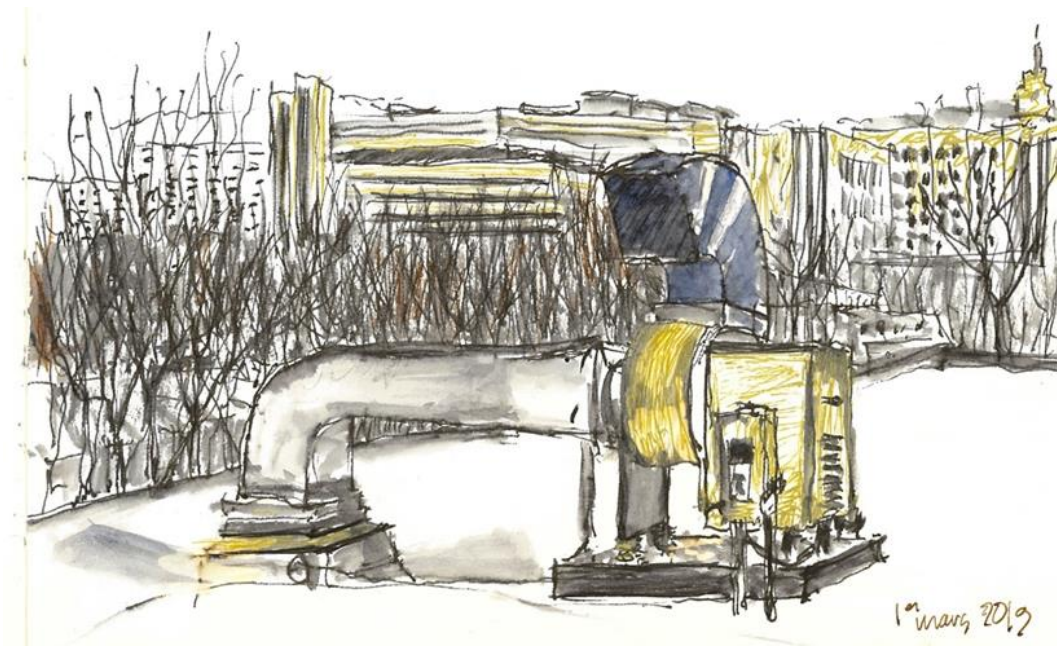
3.

A footbridge links the garden to the pavilion, overlooking the multi-level space beneath and, from this perspective, underscoring the old and new parts of the building.



4.

From the bottom of the stepped space, no outlook at all. The dumpster is enthroned like a monument, in the center of its court, forever ensconced, and yet temporary.



5.

The Université de Montréal campus is bursting out all over in leafy greenness. Here, the building's mechanical vent juxtaposes technology and nature.



6.

Snow and more snow. It envelops the pavilion for months on end, without curtailing the construction work all around.



7. The old trees that line the pavilion's back courtyard stand as vestiges of the gardens that once grew there, owned, like many buildings on the campus, by religious communities.

Note

The drawings are from my Handbook sketchbooks, 5.25" X 8.25", watercolor paper 200mgs.

About the author

Nicole Valois is a landscape architect and a full professor in landscape architecture at the School of Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture, in the Faculty of Environmental Design, at the University of Montreal, where she teaches urban design studios and landscape heritage. Her research interests include landscape heritage and the modern period of landscape architecture as well as landscape architecture project drawings and the role of freehand drawing in design. She led the significant landscape heritage study of the Université de Montréal campus, published in the University Press of Montreal, and the University Press of Perpignan. She served as an expert in numerous organizations, including the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec and the Conseil du patrimoine de Montréal, where she served as vice-president for three years. More information here:

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