

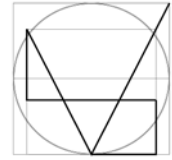
MONTREAL BALLPARK AT THE PEEL BASIN

**BASED ON THE 2005 MASTER'S
ARCHITECTURAL THESIS PROJECT BY
VEDANTA BALBAHADUR AT MCGILL
UNIVERSITY**

**Presented for the Public Consultations of
SECTEUR BRIDGE – BONAVENTURE
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MONTREAL BALLPARK AT THE PEEL BASIN

The question of whether Montreal builds a new ballpark — and the location for it — has been controversial for some time. My following testimony explains that a new ballpark for Montreal can do a lot of good. How so, and under what conditions? A ballpark designed with community needs in mind can be both a leading edge centre for sports, recreation, the arts, and culture as well as part of a municipal strategy to preserve community interests while reducing the effects of gentrification to avoid repeating development missteps in the recent past in neighboring areas (e.g., Griffintown).

In 2005, months after the Montreal Expos left for Washington DC, I designed a ballpark and train station located at the Peel Basin of Montreal. The project was an ode to something our city had lost but meant as a strategy to bring baseball back to Montreal. It was my professional master's thesis at the McGill University School of Architecture, where I now teach in addition to working in practice as a licensed architect. The park I envisioned at that time functioned as a place for cultural events, social gathering, and as facility for baseball that embraced the historic infrastructure of the area by using existing urban elements to shape the field, stands, concourse, restaurants, shops, and a transit hub.

As I wrote at the time: “In addition to the program involved with the game (seating, concessions, ticket booths etc.), a commuter train station will be incorporated along the CN lines to allow access to the park from the surrounding areas. This [hybrid] typology will lead to new relationships between program, blurring the boundaries of what traditionally belongs to each. At the confluence of the canal, autoroute, and rail lines, the ballpark becomes an entity that is molded, structured by

each element, but at the same time reaches out and restructures the basin area, providing not just the field, seating, and train station, but also restaurants and bars, as well as places to dock alongside the canal.”

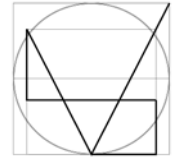
My research at the time led me to select the site on the north side of the Peel Basin (in Griffintown between the rail line and the Bonaventure Bridge) — facing the location being considered today. For me, that site was ripe with potential: across from Pointe St-Charles, the location was the “logical extension” westward of activity along the canal from Old Montreal and a vital node at the culmination of the Peel Street axis that begins at the mountain and passes through the city centre. The site offered a beautiful view to downtown Montreal, but sadly that view has been obscured by the developments in Griffintown in recent years.

I avoid using the word “stadium” alone because the “park” I designed was intended to be just that — a park to welcome residents of Montreal (especially those of Griffintown and Pointe St-Charles) as a centre for the arts, culture, and recreation when games were not being played. “In this way, two events become the prime means of activating the site: the gathering of people for their own pursuits (play/recreation/business lunches/studying)” and the “event”, both sporting and cultural.

In 2006 after my graduation from architecture school, I was profiled in an article “Making Their Mark” in *Building Magazine* that presented my ballpark design. Shortly thereafter, I presented the project at the Griffintown public consultations in 2008, and my project was published in the 2012 Montreal Issue of *Satellite Magazine* along with an illustrated essay I wrote about Montreal's history. In 2012, Warren Cromartie, former Montreal Expo and founder of the Montreal Baseball Project,

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reached out to me requesting to review my ballpark project, which was situated at the Peel Basin, a location that architects and developers had not been focusing on as early as 2005 for such a project.

We are at a time in history where empathy and understanding for our neighbours and communities is paramount to the betterment of the world around us. A ballpark initiative that listens carefully to the needs and interests of the local community will set this project apart from stadiums whose focus is on corporate interests instead of the community. Fostering community values and seizing the opportunity for residential and cultural program will allow a new Montreal ballpark to become a model for future stadium design, a bold architectural prototype that sets an example for the rest of the world, both formally and socially. Montreal should see this initiative as doing local good while effecting change on a global level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As attention has shifted toward the Peel Basin in recent years, my 2005 ballpark project is more relevant than ever because it showcases many important features that a new urban ballpark in Montreal, particularly one at that location, should implement. I encourage you to review the accompanying material, which as early as 2005 outlined the same recommendations that I now have in 2019.

These recommendations include:

- Locating the park close to downtown Montreal, Pointe St-Charles, and Griffintown is important. Maintaining proximity to these vibrant sectors of Montreal takes advantage of the short, walkable distance to reach the ballpark after a workday.
- Integrating the existing and historic industrial landscape into the project will be vital. These treasures define our city's past, and the sites around the Peel Basin are considered the cradle of industrialization in Canada. Maintenance and rehabilitation of nearby infrastructure must be a priority.
- The design of any future park must ensure that commerce and year-round cultural activities, including free or low-cost options, are included in its purview — even its very structure — so that it can be used in all seasons.
- Interventions should include green areas extending out from the ballpark into the community, a connection to public transit and the adjacent rail line, sites to dock watercraft, and the promotion of pedestrian and cycling along the canal (including places for bike storage and repair). A public plaza belonging to both the ballpark and the canal and even the direct integration of pedestrian or cycling routes into the park are opportunities to seize.
- There should be a focus on providing housing either integrated or in close proximity that connects and harmonizes with the surrounding neighbourhood, carefully taking into consideration the interests of a community that has been based in Pointe St-Charles for decades. This will help to avoid the kind of gentrification seen in Griffintown, whose lack of planning has been criticized throughout the city and country, and is considered a method of development that should be avoided.
- In bringing the aforementioned elements together, there must be an emphasis on meaningful placemaking and a holistic vision for the project.

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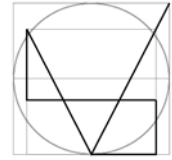


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Biography

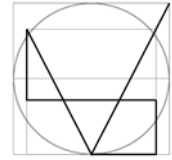
Vedanta Balbahadur

Architect MOAQ, MRAIC, LEED AP

VEDANTA BALBAHADUR

ARCHITECTE

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BIOGRAPHY

Vedanta Balbahadur (b. Montreal, Quebec, 1982) is a licensed architect and educator who received his professional masters in architecture from McGill University. He practices and teaches in Montreal, where he opened his architectural practice in 2018. He has been a close collaborator of EKM Architecture in Montreal since 2015 and has worked for Saucier + Perrotte architectes (2006-2014) and Studio Daniel Libeskind (2005, 2006) on projects that have been published the world over. A LEED accredited professional, he is known for combining a progressive design ethic with a user-oriented approach. He is a passionate fan of baseball and the Montreal Expos and dreams for their return to Montreal in a way that supports local communities and does not cause negative socio-economic impacts on the city.

Balbahadur is a design studio instructor (part-time faculty) at the McGill University Peter Guo-hua Fu School of Architecture, where he has taught at every level of undergraduate studios. Balbahadur has been an invited critic and lecturer for graduate and undergraduate studios/courses at University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, Carleton University, McGill University, Concordia University, and Université de Montréal. He also teaches *Physical Environment, Sustainability, and Contemporary Culture* at the McGill University School of Continuing Studies, a course he has specifically tailored to introduce key concepts in architecture, design, and the urban environment to students from diverse majors and backgrounds.

Vedanta Balbahadur believes that architecture must spring from a poetic vision, take an ethical stance in society, and contribute to the welfare of the built environment and its inhabitants through innovation in design and sustainable strategies. His work has afforded him the opportunity to pursue projects that push boundaries, and he uses his art and photography to focus and nurture his outlook on the urban environment. His writing, photography, and 2005 architectural thesis project (a hybrid ballpark for Montreal located at the Peel Basin) have been featured in *Satellite Magazine* and *Building Magazine*. His photography has had the longest exhibition run in the history of Nota Bene in Montreal (Vedanta Balbahadur: Reflections on Mies van der Rohe) and has also been exhibited at Espace Projet (Montreal), Victoria Hall Gallery (Westmount, Quebec), Black Box Gallery (Portland, Oregon), and at McGill University. Awards he has received include the Gerald Sheff Award for Teaching, the RAIC/MARMOMACC Scholarship to Italy, the Prix de la Fondation Habitat '67, the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts / Eberhard Zeidler Scholarship for Architecture, McGill's Ping Kwan Lau Prize in Architecture, inclusion on the RAIC Honour Roll, and the National School Orchestra Award.

“Baseball, Architecture, and the City of the Future”

Essay and photos by Vedanta Balbahadur describing his 2005 ballpark project and Montreal history.

Featured in the “Montreal Issue” of *Satellite Magazine* (2012).

SATELLITE

A photograph of a snowy landscape at night. In the foreground, there is a large, textured pile of snow. In the background, two streetlights are visible, casting a bright glow and illuminating the snow. The sky is dark, and the overall scene is dimly lit by the streetlights.

MONTREAL

NOAM CHOMSKY ON IRAN

MUMBAI

OSLO

ART

Satellite is a biannual magazine focusing on cities, culture, and politics. Each issue features an in-depth look at a single city, alongside interviews, art, and nonfiction.

On the Web, visit us at satellitemagazine.ca. Email us at info@satellitemagazine.ca.

Cover image: detail of *Mt. Hortons* by Thomas Kneubühler.

Satellite is based in Toronto. Our staff consists of editors Steven Garbas and Sarah Wessler, contributing editors Ashley Rawlings and Gayna Theophilus, and copyeditors T. J. McLemore and Natalie Nanowski.

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THE LADY JOSEPHINE has been working as a burlesque performer since 2008 and studying environmentalism and activism since 2001. She brought home the award for most beautiful act at the Great Boston Burlesque Expo in 2011 and has appeared on stages from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C.

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DENISE SANTIILLAN MORENO is an artist and designer from Montreal currently based out of Toronto. She divides her time between these two Canadian cities and Mexico, where she was born and where she continues to escape the Canadian cold. To check out some of her work or to contact her, visit her Web site, denisesantillan.com.

RIDDHI SHAH is an associate editor at The Huffington Post. Her writing has also appeared in *The Boston Globe*, the *Atlantic's* website, Salon.com, and *Saveur* magazine. The two greatest loves of her life are food and India.

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MARC THORPE was born in San Francisco. In 1979, he joined Industrial Light and Magic/Lucasfilm, where he worked until 1994 as a chief modelmaker and animatronic designer, creating special effects for feature films including *The Empire Strikes Back*, *The Return of the Jedi*, and the original Indiana Jones trilogy. In 1993 he created *Robot Wars*, a mechanical art and sport in which radio-controlled robots compete in live, gladiator-style events. He currently works at Stupid Fun Club.

SARAH WESSELER grew up in Cincinnati and lives in Brooklyn.

AMY VAILLANCOURT grew up in Wakefield, Quebec. She holds a BA in urban studies and is a visual artist. Her artwork explores the urban environment and built infrastructure. The materials, texture, and ideas for her work are often derived from the ordinary and mundane of everyday life.

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BASEBALL, ARCHITECTURE, AND THE CITY OF THE FUTURE

TEXT AND IMAGES BY VEDANTA BALBAHADUR

MONTREAL HAS LONG BEEN recognized as one of North America's artistic hubs. But for the last century it has also been synonymous with another cultural phenomenon: hockey, a game thoroughly suited to the city's long, unrelenting winters.

When spring and glorious summer arrive, though, Montrealers come out of hibernation in droves, peeling off jackets and sweaters to enjoy the sunshine. As any Montrealer will tell you, being outdoors in the summer to enjoy the all-too-short respite from the cold is essential.

And for more than one hundred years, baseball has been a staple of the city's summer days. While the departure of Montreal's professional baseball team, the Expos, to Washington, D.C., may seem to indicate lack of local interest in the game, the truth is more complicated. During its final years in Montreal, behind-the-scenes maneuvering involving the Expos' ownership and operation further complicated a difficult set of circumstances surrounding the team (one of them being the weak Canadian dollar in the nineties).

The loss of the Expos can be thought of as one of the last blows to an era often considered the city's glory days. Today, Montreal is an amalgamation of thriving, culturally diverse neighborhoods—a fact of which its residents are justifiably proud. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that Montreal never quite reached the “city of the future” aspirations it set for itself during the sixties, when the eyes of the world were focused on it as a site for twentieth-century progress. Although we now look back critically on the aspirations of modernist planners and reformers, it is clear that in many ways Montreal is still slumbering in the shadow of that time. How telling it is that the city was the first in Canada to hold a World's Fair (Expo 67), the first to host an Olympics Games (1976), and the first outside the United States to acquire a major league baseball franchise. The departure of the Expos is further proof that those days have passed.

And yet my own experience has amply demonstrated the city's love for the game itself. Along with a few of my coworkers, I keep my baseball glove in my desk at work so that we can play catch at the park down the street during our lunch hour. On some Friday evenings, I take my glove home, wearing it on my hand, perennially breaking it in. As I walk through the city, time and again I am stopped by passersby who ask me if I play. It's remarkable

how many people open up, sentimentally recalling their younger days playing baseball or softball or attending Expos games with their families. In fact, upon seeing my glove, the patriarch of Cafe Union down the street from where I work proudly tells me of his days playing fast pitch at Jarry Park. He even brings his own glove to work so that we can indulge in a catch with one of the chefs from *Depanneur Le Pick Up*, a corner store/gourmet snack bar across from my office.

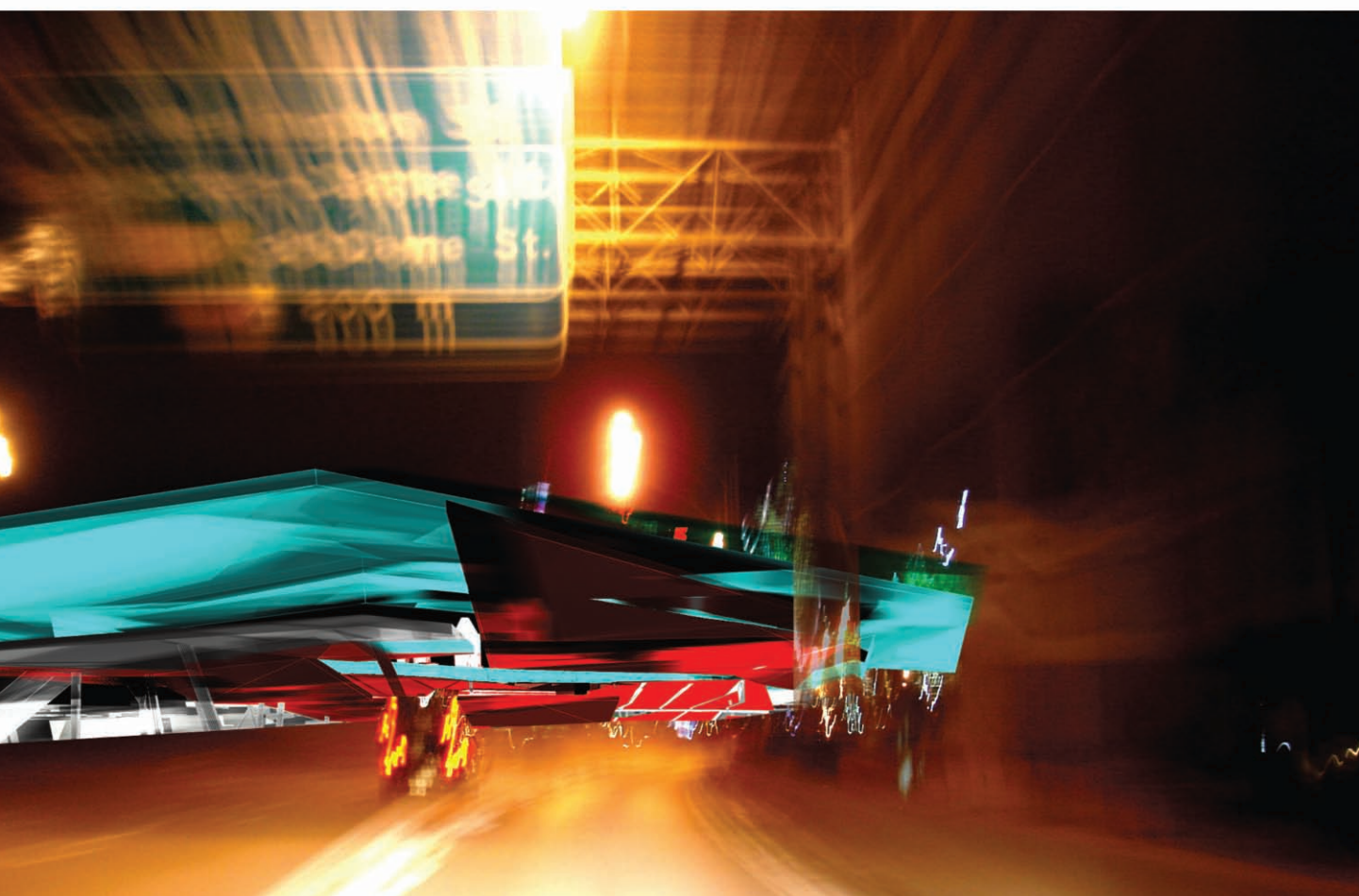
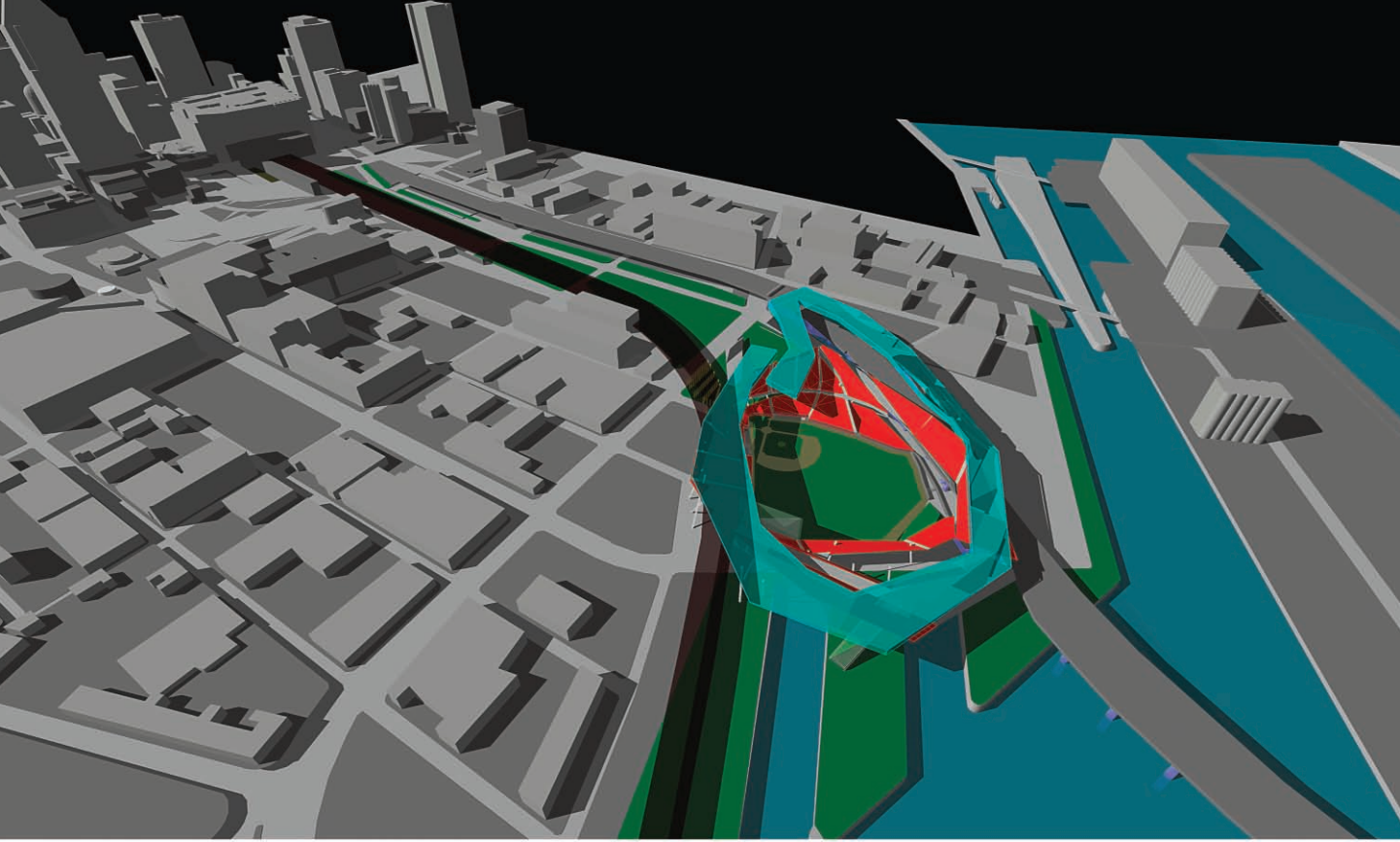
To flash back just a few seasons: the year after the Expos left Montreal, I began my final thesis project in architecture school. Despite the seemingly daunting task of choosing a final project, the answer was fairly obvious: I would design a downtown ballpark for Montreal. I wanted to create a park that would avoid the pitfalls associated with Montreal's Olympic Stadium, which, although it provided fans with twenty-eight years of memories, was ill-suited to baseball and located a considerable distance from the city center.

But the Big O was not the only problem I wanted to address. Contemporary stadium design in general is in need of attention, its forms arguably having stagnated. In recent years, cities have gravitated toward historical, neotraditional architecture, trying to mend the blights on the urban scene caused by the sixties cookie-cutter saucer stadium phenomenon.

However, I had no interest in designing a stadium for the sake of baseball alone, despite my passion for the game. Postulating new directions for ballparks as urban design, the endeavor was about the welfare of the city and the future design of an integral, if long-neglected, part of its fabric.

I grew increasingly attentive to the situation facing Griffintown, a sparsely populated former industrial sector south of the downtown core. An ideal match for Griffintown, the proposed park would be just that—a park, and one to which people could walk. The project sought to employ notions of gathering and urban events, including sport, as a springboard to facilitate the urban renewal of the area.

The ballpark is an ode to what the city has loved and lost, both in terms of sport and urban vitality. Its goal: to inject the Griffintown area with new life by means of a meaningful intervention at a critical node along Montreal's Lachine Canal.





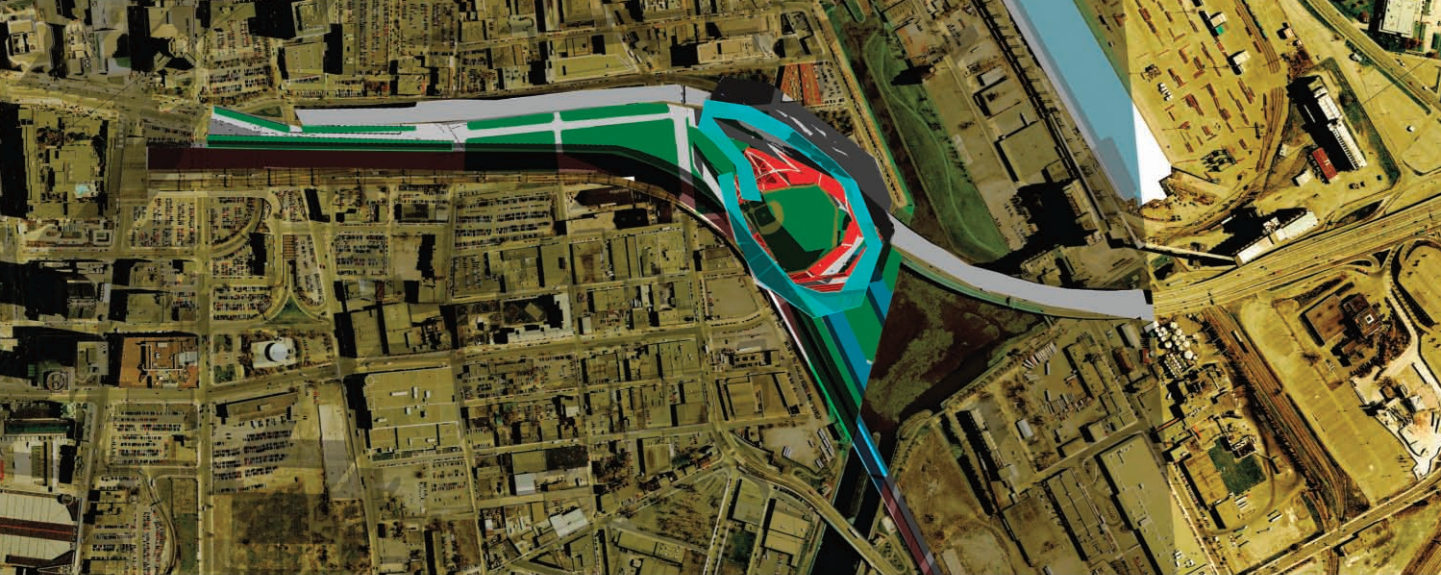
The proposed ballpark considers the role of urban events in regenerating parts of a city. The project reflects the importance of baseball to Montreal's history and tries to rekindle the exuberance that characterized the city during its heyday.

The project examines the notion that the contemporary ballpark must be reconsidered, especially in Montreal, by getting back to the essence of the game—appropriating an interstitial space as a venue for urban activity. The park is located at an extraordinary site along Griffintown's Peel Basin, considered the birthplace of industrialization in Canada. While acknowledging the realities and demands of contemporary professional sport, the project remains critical of the corporate generative components of modern stadium design,

maintaining that the public and a connection to the city play a vital role.

Griffintown, an area poised to undergo a process of revitalization, is a remarkable setting for this re-imagining. Rather than creating an isolated object that fosters an emphasis on vehicular access, the park emerges from Griffintown's urban connective tissue and engages the infrastructural elements that run as seams through the city. In so doing, it defies the norms of both what structured private space and pluralistic gathering spaces can be. It at once facilitates the gathering of people in observance of spectacle and restructures a site that has been long underappreciated—the Peel Basin, a logical focal point along the Lachine Canal leading west from Old Montreal, and the node that ends the





Peel Street axis. While the Bonaventure Expressway and the CN rail lines act as arteries that have strangled the site from outside contact since their introduction to Griffintown, an incredible potential exists in the space between these elevated lines of transport for an urban intervention that could serve as a model for how such tight interstices—common to all cities—can be dealt with.

The location along the Lachine Canal adds to the idea of the park as an urban destination. The main procession to the ballpark takes place on the path located between the highway and train line that begins from downtown.

This artery is currently being studied by the city for high-rise development and a series of urban plazas.

As envisioned in the ballpark project, parts of this path would be planted with vegetation leading up to the forecourt of the park, proceeding to the field and terminating at the basin's piers. In this way, the green of the field extends through the city itself. Glimpses to the field are afforded to passersby, since they are equally vital to the festivities as the paying participants and players. The portion of the Bonaventure Expressway nearest the site can be closed during events of extremely high attendance, literally connecting the park to another layer of the city. Should the city follow through with plans to ground this portion of the raised highway, transforming it into an urban boulevard, the ballpark will gain additional open space and exposure to water on its east side.



It has been fifty years since Place Ville Marie, Montreal's most celebrated steel and glass skyscraper, was built. A glittering beacon of corporate modernism in Canada, the cruciform-shaped tower (designed by I. M. Pei and Associates with the Montreal firm that later became known as ARCOP) marked the epicenter of Montreal's new downtown core. It also served as the starting point of the underground city, which allows pedestrian commuters to cover vast distances without having to set foot outside in winter.

Although real estate booms were nothing new to the city when the tower was built, the sixties were in many ways the decade when Montreal came of age. The city was a canvas for experimentation with new forms of planning and architecture.

Designed to cover a gaping hole where trains emerged from below ground, the Place Ville Marie project explored the idea of a building complex as miniature city that would connect to the surrounding urban infrastructure. As such, it would become a model for most Montreal buildings that linked to the underground network, and, later, for New York's World Trade Center (1973).

Place Bonaventure took this a step further, seeking to combine disparate programs (hotel, exhibition facilities, offices, and links to the train station, subway, shopping, and restaurants) into a complex that functioned as a fundamentally inward-looking cauldron of activity. Alexis-Nihon Plaza, Complexe Desjardins, and others followed suit, pushing the boundaries of hybrid typologies in North America.

Towers rose simultaneously throughout the sixties, providing clear evidence of the migration of the city's financial core away from the historic old town (a move that had begun decades earlier but was slowed by the Depression and Second World War). The decade saw the construction of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) Tower and Pier Luigi Nervi and Luigi Moretti's Stock Exchange Tower at Square Victoria, as well as the completion of Mies van der Rohe's Westmount Square. (One of the most fascinating anecdotes to emerge from this frenzy of building activity involved the rivalry of Place Ville Marie and the CIBC Tower, homes to nationally competing banks, each vying to have the tallest skyscraper in Canada. Because CIBC raced to beat Place Ville Marie, the Pei team was able to pull out its ace in the hole, the addition of a penthouse-level club and restaurant that put its height over that of its competitor.)

If its pioneering design epitomized a city growing to adulthood in the mid-twentieth century, Montreal appears to have become a senior citizen in the intervening years. Despite its generally progressive outlook, the city seems to be resting on its laurels, less interested in making the bold, avant-garde statements that caught the world's attention decades ago than in facelifts and emergency reconstructive surgery. Much of the city's infrastructure and building stock is in dire need of repair, falling apart in direct proportion to the alleged corruption in its construction industry. Remedial measures are no longer sufficient for many of the city's bridges, overpasses, and interchanges; planning has begun for the complete replacement of most of Montreal's major infrastructure. Last summer, the unrelenting construction in the streets seemed more intense than ever before, the objective being not only to even out the city's infamous potholes, but—even more pressing—to replace plumbing that is already more than a century old.

The population has become disillusioned with the shoddy craftsmanship and poor upkeep that have become fodder for the city's newspapers and talk radio over the last decade. Across Canada, Montreal is seen as an example of what not to do when it comes to contemporary city-building.

This is not, of course, the Montreal presented to outsiders—the romantic, “European” city that tourists love. It is, however, the town that Montrealers live with every day. In spite of its flaws, though, most Montrealers adore their city and defend it vehemently. Somehow, the artistic backbone and cultural diversity of the city allow its residents to see past its problems.

The splendor of the city comes from its remarkable history and its great food, arts, music, culture, and people. It is a city of festivals unlike any other, one whose glorious summers are reason enough for those who left years ago to return.

The coexistence of two predominant language groups, though at times taken for granted, broadens the horizons of Montreal's inhabitants, adding to a vibrant cultural landscape. While people living on different sides of the city often have different perspectives—long attributed to the historic east-west divide between the French and English—the intersection of the two languages and cultures is

Above right: Place Ville Marie; Mary, Queen of the World Basilica; and the Queen Elizabeth Hotel (site of John Lennon and Yoko Ono's Montreal Bed-In). Right: View toward Montreal's East End (Place des Arts in the foreground, bottom, and the Olympic Stadium in the background)





precisely what makes living here so stimulating on a day-to-day basis. Indeed, it has been said that a person cannot really experience one hundred per cent of Montreal without interacting in both main languages. And this richesse has increased as the city's population has become more diverse. Today, people are routinely heard communicating interchangeably in French, English, and other languages, blurring the traditional linguistic schism.

* * *

Having inherited the good, the bad, and the ugly of its sixties boom, Montreal is thoroughly a product of that era. The downtown core may be the most visible result of the building spree, but ripple effects were felt throughout the metropolitan region. The mass transit and underground Metro system that followed were vital to connecting the new core to many areas that are considered quintessentially Montreal: Armand Vaillancourt and Leonard Cohen's Plateau, Mordecai Richler's Mile End, Irving Layton's Cote St-Luc, Denys Arcand's Westmount, and the Wainwrights' Outremont. The earth excavated in creating the subway system even made possible the islands in the St. Lawrence River that comprised the Expo 67 fairgrounds.

However, the investment in developing the city's image as an interconnected, cosmopolitan metropolis boded ill for Griffintown, a neighborhood that had been instrumental in Montreal's rise toward twentieth-century stardom.

Located southwest of the city's current downtown core, the nation's oldest working-class neighborhood was named after Mary Griffin, who acquired the lease for the land as part of an illegal deal with a business associate of Thomas McCord. McCord had initially obtained the land in 1791, hoping to capitalize on the new canal and rail lines then being proposed for the area. Sure enough, during the first half of the nineteenth century Griffintown became home to a thriving industrial zone around the Port of Montreal and the Lachine Canal.

Over the hundred years that followed the opening of the canal in 1824–1825, Montreal blossomed into a major trading port along the St. Lawrence and its population more than quadrupled. Most of Griffintown's inhabitants during this period were Irish immigrants who had come to Canada in search of work. Living conditions in the neighborhood were

notoriously bad; the wealth of Montreal's Golden Square Mile and Upper City did not trickle down to the laborers. Nonetheless, Griffintown residents took pride in their community, forming a close-knit group that banded together to deal with floods, fires, and poor working conditions.

Over time, with the spread of development along the canal and the growth of rail shipping, industrial activity became decentralized and workers began moving elsewhere. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Griffintown's demographics changed dramatically as new immigrants arrived from Europe. In the postwar years, industry declined further, and by Expo 67, the Lachine Canal fell into disuse as the St. Lawrence Seaway became the primary channel for sea traffic.

As part of its modern-era boom, the city constructed the Bonaventure Expressway, an elevated gateway into the city. Running through Griffintown, which by this time had been rezoned as a light industrial sector, it reinforced the barrier already imposed by the CN rail line. The neighborhood was now even further divided from Old Montreal.

For decades, Griffintown languished as somewhat of a no-man's-land. In recent years, however, it has drawn attention from both historic preservation groups and developers. The city government has worked with architects, planners, and students on urban design studies and charrettes, and recently launched competitions for various sites at the Lachine Canal's Peel Basin. But the area's future remains unclear. The looming danger is developer-driven urbanism, which has threatened to bring big-box stores and streets tailored to vehicular traffic rather than pedestrians to the area. To the relief of local residents, the 2008 recession put a dent into the plans of one major developer, who delayed and scaled back its plans due to financial considerations.

As early as 2012, though, developers appear poised to go ahead with the construction of large condominium complexes. Renderings portray a sanitized environment with high-rise condos, office towers and parks running along a ground-level boulevard projected to replace the raised Bonaventure Expressway. Among the historic buildings threatened by demolition are the Cadieux Forge, the Rodier Building, and the Griffintown Horse Palace, the 150-year-old home of horses used for Old Montreal's *calèches* (horse and carriage rides). The general consensus is that something must be done to revitalize the unique

Rather than eschewing the old infrastructure, the ballpark uses it as a structuring element, embedding into and making connections with the autoroute and rail line. The park thus exists in symbiosis with them, allowing programmatic elements to infiltrate and inhabit the arcades and marginal spaces underneath these floating transit structures. Seating is designed into and around these gray arteries, creating new relationships for people both toward the event unfolding in their midst and amid the seemingly hostile infrastructure. A fact that often goes unnoticed is that the site, though residual in nature and nestled between these peculiar concrete masses, is one of the most beautiful and serene places in Montreal. The piers convey a meditative sense of tranquility. When night falls here, the city lights glisten along the horizons of the elevated connections.

The park draws the public's attention to the splendor of the site and makes full use of its inherent potential. The seating and bands of public circulation through the park create new horizons from which to observe the game, while affording views to the city, the St. Lawrence River, and the surrounding natural and industrial landscape.





The spaces under the viaducts become player arrival areas, ticket windows, restaurants, and shops.

The highway and train line take on a special role, sculpting the space of the field and acting as thresholds through which spectators must pass in procession to the game. The piers at the end of Peel Street function as places onto which activity can spill before, during, and after events, furthering the goal of actualizing the interstice as a vibrant node that speaks in cohesive correlation to neighboring sites. In addition to the program relating to the game (seating, concessions, ticket booths, etc.), a commuter train station is incorporated along the CN line to allow access to the park from surrounding areas and suburbs. This hybridized typology allows for new relationships between programs, blurring the boundaries of what traditionally belongs to each. At the confluence of the canal, the autoroute, and the rail lines, the ballpark is molded by each element, but at the same time reaches out to the basin area to provide not only a field and space for gathering, but also galleries, restaurants, commerce, and places to dock alongside the canal.

area, now home to less than a hundred people, many of them artists and students.

* * *

With various levels of government now set to infuse tens of billions of dollars into new infrastructural projects, as well as controversial French- and English-language super-hospitals, the question of what to do with the Olympic Stadium remains.

Only five years ago, Montreal finally amortized the debt on its stadium. This arguably beautiful structure was not completed until eleven years after the 1976 Olympics, the event it was designed to host. Workers' strikes, ballooning costs, and corruption brought the debt related to the Olympic facilities to almost \$1.5 billion, about six times the originally estimated cost. (This despite assurances from Jean Drapeau—the mayor who spearheaded Montreal's push for Expo 67, the Metro system, a modern downtown, major league baseball, and the Olympic Games—that the Olympiad could “no more lose money than a man can have a baby.”)

Once completed, the spectacularly expensive facility did not work as planned. What was supposed to have been a revolutionary masterpiece served primarily as an example of how not to build a stadium. Reports have shown that pre-construction tests of the original roof, an umbrella-like retractable mechanism, were unsuccessful, but this was kept quiet. The latest replacement roof will soon be installed at a cost that would easily have paid for a significant portion of a new stadium. Montreal taxpayers have grown used to paying for things that didn't work in the first place.

* * *

In his series *Baseball*, Ken Burns argues convincingly that since its inception, America's national pastime has been a mirror into the cultural consciousness of the United States. This argument can be extended to Canada, as some of the most significant events in the game's history occurred in Montreal. By the end of the nineteenth century baseball was becoming a force in the city, even with the rise of hockey as Canada's winter pastime. Various forms of baseball were played by adults and children throughout Montreal, from the East End to the West, on the streets of Griffintown and even in the rural regions of Quebec.

The 1890s saw the formation of the Montreal Royals, a professional ball club named for the mountain (Mount Royal) that gives the city its name. Though the team enjoyed popularity for twenty years, it folded in 1916. The enthusiasm that surrounded the sport did not wane, however, and in 1928 it returned to the city in the form of a Triple-A International League affiliate of the Brooklyn Dodgers. This team, also called the Royals, was the stuff of legend. On its board of directors was Charles E. Trudeau (father of former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau), who played a role in building a stadium for the team at Delormier and Ontario Streets. Over the course of its history, the team was home to some of baseball's elite alumni: Sparky Anderson, Gene Mauch (who later became the first manager of Montreal's major league franchise), Roberto Clemente, Duke Snider, Don Drysdale, Roy Campanella, Tommy Lasorda, and TV's Rifleman, Chuck Conors.

What puts this team in the history books, however, is that Jackie Robinson made his professional debut with it in 1946, breaking the so-called color barrier. His time in Montreal was a pivotal social experiment that not only led to integration in baseball, but opened the door for changing perceptions about minorities throughout North America. Before Robinson could play, Dodgers general manager Branch Rickey asked him to solemnly promise that he would never retaliate when confronted with the hostility they both knew would come from players, spectators, and even hoteliers and restaurateurs they came across when traveling—especially through the deep South. Seeing Robinson rise above the vitriol he encountered on the public stage, Rickey reasoned, would be the only way Americans would see that African American players could play not only as well as, but in many cases better than, the players already in the majors.

With all eyes on him, Robinson let his athleticism and gentlemanly comportment do the talking. He found Montreal tolerant and became thoroughly fond of the city. In his autobiography Robinson wrote: “After the rejections, the unpleasantness and uncertainties, it was encouraging to find an atmosphere of complete acceptance and something approaching adulation . . . One of the reasons for the reception we received in Montreal was that the people were proud of the team that bore the city's name. The people of Montreal were warm and wonderful to us.”

Not only did Robinson become the most valuable player that year, but he won the wholehearted support of the people of the city, more than a million of whom came out to watch him play—a staggering number for any minor league franchise. When the time came for Robinson to leave Montreal, his farewell, as poignantly described by reporter Sam Maltin, has become part of the lore of professional sports: “It was probably the only day in history that a black man ran from a white mob with love instead of lynching on its mind.”

After the Brooklyn Dodgers moved to Los Angeles, the Royals fell on tough times and finally left Montreal in 1961. But at this moment the city was undergoing the transformative boom that led to the 1967 World’s Fair, a celebration of “Man and His World” with the backdrop of Montreal as the city of the future. The world’s media was focused on the city as never before, and all eyes were on Expo 67—including those of major league baseball, which with the right impetus stood ready to fill the void the Royals had left.

Several locations were scouted for a stadium, including Delorimier Downs and the Autostade, but when Jarry Park was selected the Montreal Expos became the first major league franchise to have a home outside the United States. Charles Bronfman, the majority shareholder in Seagram, became the majority owner of the franchise. (The extent to which the Bronfman family has contributed to Montreal arts and culture should be noted. Had Charles not stepped in as owner, the Expos may not have started playing in 1969. The family’s commitment to education in Montreal has also been exemplary. In addition, Charles’ sister, Phyllis Lambert, a student of and collaborator with Mies van der Rohe, has played an invaluable role in the North American architectural community, advocating and raising awareness about the profession and founding the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. Even though I have had the pleasure of meeting her on various occasions at the CCA, at the symphony, and elsewhere, I have yet to fully convey to her my gratitude for all that she and her family have done for the city.)

From the outset, the Expos became the beloved boys of summer. Throughout the late seventies and early eighties, even after the team had moved into the cavernous Olympic Stadium, fans flocked to watch “Nos Amours,” as the team was adoringly called (reminiscent of “Nos Glorieux,” the endearing

nickname of the Montreal Canadiens hockey club during its wonder years). Noah Richler has written that, like many Montrealers from all backgrounds, his father, novelist Mordecai, “was serious in his allegiances: hockey in the winter, and baseball in the summer.” Fans like Mordecai were privileged, growing up watching Jackie Robinson’s Royals and later having the opportunity to cheer on the Expos at Jarry and the Big O, then sharing their memories with the younger generations. Over the decades, Expos fans had the pleasure of watching players like Staub, Rogers, Cromartie, Carter, Spaceman Lee, Dawson, Raines, Dennis Martinez, Galarraga, Walker, Grissom, Alou, Wettland, Floyd, White, Pedro Martinez, Vidro, Cabrera, Vladimir Guerrero, and many others who left an indelible mark on the city’s culture of baseball.

After Bronfman gave up ownership in 1991, however, and as the Canadian dollar declined over the decade, it became more difficult to attract players to the city in spite of all its charms. Montreal’s system of developing young talent was the envy of most teams, but once its players became stars they would invariably leave to play elsewhere for significantly higher salaries (in American dollars), causing the Expos to be often regarded as a farm team for other clubs.

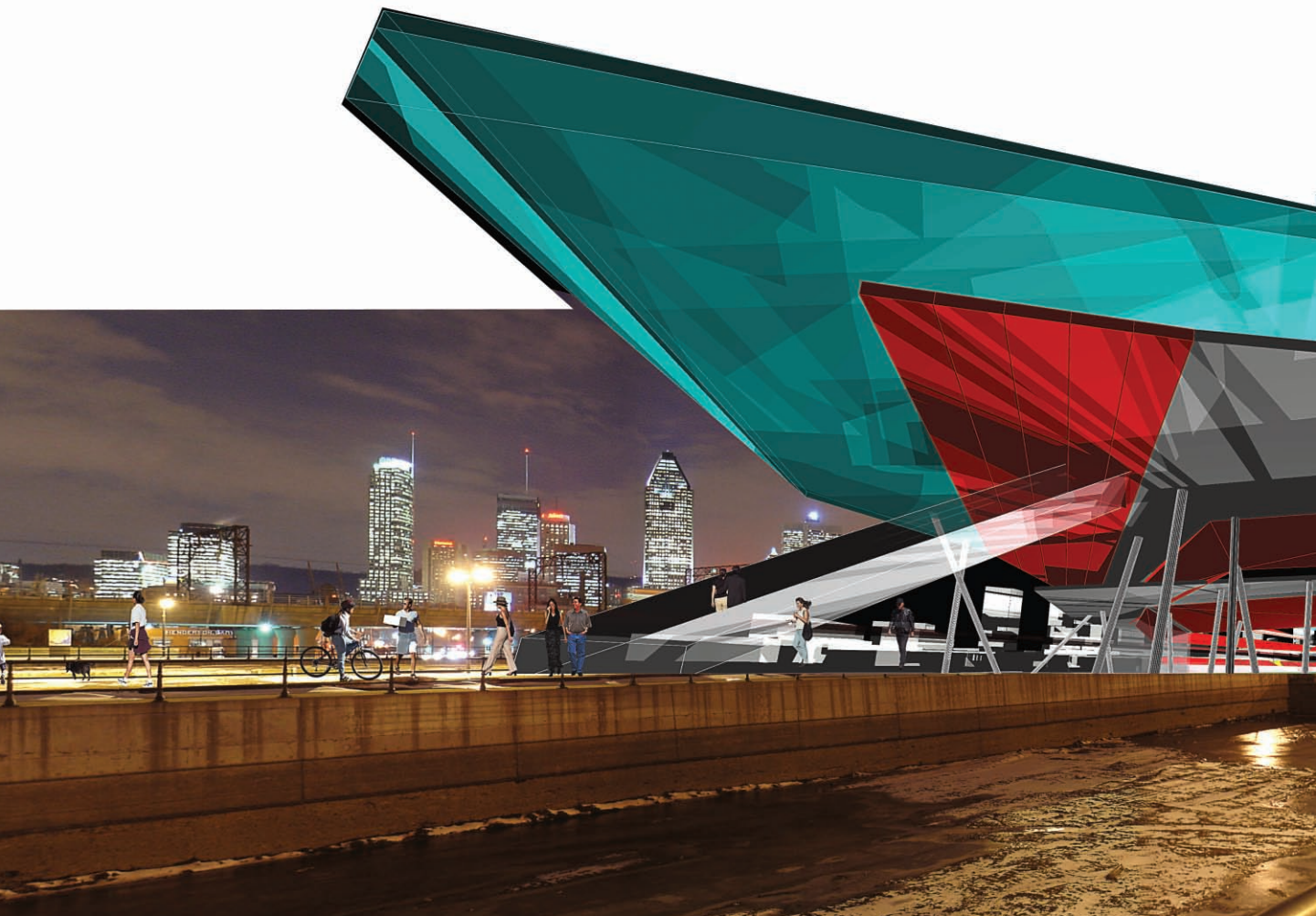
Pinpointing the beginning of the end for the Expos is difficult. There had been a series of disappointing moments, with issues ranging from broadcasting rights, sponsorship, and marketing to the value of the dollar. But one thing is certain: the strike-shortened 1994 season was a tremendous blow. Expos fans literally cringe at the mention of that season. The team had the best record and arguably the best players in baseball—many thought the Expos would win it all. It is generally agreed that the absence of a World Series run caused by the strike, coupled with the departure of key players before the following season, carved the path for rough days ahead. Baseball fans and pundits can only speculate about the outstanding team that would have existed in Montreal after 1994 had the Expos won a championship that season.

In 1999, a new owner purchased the team, promising to serve its best interests and work toward a new downtown stadium. Though his administration’s initial moves raised excitement, many of his subsequent actions were questionable, and the team was effectively run into the ground during his tenure. He eventually purchased another

club and left with the Expos' manager, coaches, personnel, scouting reports, and even the computers and office equipment. With its infrastructure gone, the team came under league ownership and was relocated in 2005 to Washington, D.C.

It pains many Montrealers to think of the mismanagement of the team and the unfolding of events leading to its departure. To Expos fans, the league was just as much at fault, for while it worked with other cities whose teams were threatened by low attendance, contraction, and relocation, Montreal seemed hardly to receive the same kind of support. (In fact, the league's commissioner was later sued, along with the last owner, for racketeering and conspiracy to defraud the team's minority owners.) The league apparently overlooked the interest shown by Montrealers for the sport—professional baseball was played in the city throughout most of the twentieth century, in addition to the amateur and youth leagues that have flourished. But Montrealers

remain passionate and vocal about the game. The recent death of Expos icon and hall-of-famer Gary Carter, known as "the Kid" throughout baseball, has triggered a tide of emotion and memories from Montrealers, many of whom have chimed in with ideas for what the city should do in his honor. Expo alum Warren Cromartie is himself working to keep the rich history of the game alive in the city by means of his Montreal Baseball Project. In recent years the resurgence in the popularity of the team has been evidenced by the paraphernalia worn on the streets of the city and the number of Facebook hits the team site receives. Speculation about the possible return of a team with the right ownership group rears its head time and again—along with talk about the need for a new open-air ballpark, which Montreal hasn't had for more than half a century. As with all sports, talk is talk until something happens. But in a city full of surprises, that something might happen sooner than we think.



The field is the location of ballgames for eighty-one days and nights during the year. Important to the scheme is the desire to give over the field of play to the public during times when there is no game—especially during the off season. At these times, the park remains open for visitors throughout the day. In this way, two methods become the prime means of activating the site: the gathering of people for their own pursuits (play, recreation, business lunches, studying) and the planned event. The park therefore resonates with activity all year round, unlike most of today's private stadiums. The activities incorporated on and under the site (eateries, shops) ensure that it is active even in the winter, rather than remaining desolate as the site is at present.

Other programmed events, such as concerts and artistic shows, take place at the ballpark, and the bands of circulation through the site offer secondary and tertiary areas for performances and exhibits, so that multiple events can occur on-site as part of larger integrated shows or separate, individual spectacles.

The large electronic scoreboard and the canopy hover above the ballpark, giving the architecture a distinct presence in the city and offering Montrealers busily on their way glimpses into the world of the unfolding event. Underneath the field is the digital inverse of the event at hand, an immersive environment of virtual inhabitation for spectators with live, streaming images broadcast from games and other events. New relationships are fostered between player and fan as glimpses are given into certain player preparation areas. The digital underbelly presents a milieu in which the virtual dimension of the game can be critiqued as well as celebrated by the everyday spectator.

The park creates within its confines a world whose energy bleeds out into Griffintown and right into downtown. It encapsulates a vibrant node, a destination that activates the Peel Basin. Ultimately this project is not about precisely prescribed activity, but a re-envisioning of the exquisite interstice and infrastructure of the city. The urban event, as its focus, enables this restructuring. Baseball is simply the vessel. ■



Abstract

Brief description of Vedanta Balbahadur's ballpark project, designed in 2005 for his master's architectural thesis at McGill University and presented to the 2008 Public Consultations for Griffintown.

A PARK FOR GRIFFINTOWN

SUBMITTED FOR THE 2008 PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS FOR GRIFFINTOWN

Located on a site considered to be the birthplace of industrialization in Canada, this ballpark project creates a place for gathering along the Lachine Canal in historic Griffintown. The interstitial park offers an avant-garde approach to architecture in this old quartier, an architecture that simultaneously celebrates the neighbourhood's storied history while looking to the future, serving to revitalize the spirit of the Griffintown area and rekindle the exuberance that once so dramatically characterized Montreal. At the confluence of the canal, the autoroute, and the rail lines, the ballpark is molded by each element, and integrates into the surrounding infrastructure taking advantage of the potential to use the arcades and spaces underneath the viaducts. Reaching out to the basin area, the park provides a field, seating, a train station, restaurants, shops, as well as places to dock alongside the canal. Make no mistake: the site itself, though seemingly residual, is one of the most beautiful locations in the entire city. The piers—though so close to downtown and nestled between modes of transportation—convey a meditative sense of tranquility. When night falls here, the city lights glisten along the horizon of the elevated connections, allowing for dramatic views back to downtown and the surrounding industrial landscape.

The proposed park resonates with life all day (for concerts, exhibitions, nightlife, etc.) and year-round—even in the wintertime, when ice and snow events can take place on the field and on the canal. The main procession to the events at the ballpark takes place on the path located between the highway and train line that begins from the downtown core. The path to the ballpark is planted green starting from downtown and proceeding to the basin's piers. In this way, the green of the field extends through the city itself.

Just as the architecture marks the importance of the site's particular history, the ballpark signifies a vestige of an important social and cultural artifact in Montreal's history — namely the sport of baseball — whose roots, like those of industry, date back more than a century in Canada.

Still, this project is not about any one sport, but about spectacle in general terms in our city. It conveys a type of direction for this part of town, one that values the past while offering an architectural energy that is worthy of Griffintown and Montreal.

The aim of this memoire is to highlight the extreme potential of this particular site as emblematic of the possibilities for the entire area. It attempts to demonstrate that contemporary architecture can play a vital role in a historical context and that architecture that is of our time can in fact work successfully alongside century-old architecture and 50 year old infrastructure.

This thesis took advantage of the Bonaventure Expressway as a significant artery into the city, allowing for a peculiar tension between the architecture and the infrastructure. Of course, there is the possibility that the autoroute will be removed at some point in the future, and if this were the case, any such park, even the ballpark presented here, would still be quite successful, having frontage right up to the water on the south side.

Simply put, the goal is to highlight that those involved in this process should take the opportunity to recognize an important piece of any development puzzle—places for public gathering and play that benefit the entire neighborhood and the city as a whole. How wonderful it would be for this site to become an open, public park-like space. Ultimately, this thesis is not about precisely prescribed activity but re-envisioning the exquisite interstice and infrastructure of the city. The event, the focus, enables this restructuring. Baseball is simply the vessel.

Vedanta Balbahadur, M.Arch (2005)

Presented at the 2008 Public Consultations For Griffintown

A Park for Griffintown: An “Eventual” Architecture

Whatever previous generations cultivated by their toil and struggle into a harmonious whole, in every sphere of culture, whatever enduring style was deemed established as method and norm, is once more in flux and now seeks new forms whereby reason, as yet unsatisfied, may develop more freely.

Edmund Husserl

Baseball separates itself from other sports. Fans go to a game to see the venue, to see the stadium, as opposed to sometimes, to see the game. It's a place where you can have a conversation with your son or daughter, and you can spend time well.

Buck Showalter

Baseball is a beautiful sport of dualities: the game is about the moment and the whole event; about the individual and the team; about timelessness and the sensed passage of time. It is about ritual and collective gathering; about venturing forth and returning home. Just as baseball in Montreal has been a cultural artifact full of complexity, so has been the context of contemporary sport North America. This thesis, by proposing a new baseball park for Montreal, reenvisions the role of the stadium and the possibilities for event in the city, both in its implications for culture as well as in activating a long dormant node in the city...

The departure of professional baseball in Montreal has signaled the loss of one of the last remaining vestiges of the Expo and Olympic era of Montreal. This project reflects on the legacy of baseball as an important social and cultural artifact in Montreal's history and proposes a new ballpark to rekindle the once extant exuberance that characterized the city during its heyday in the 1960's and 70's. Yet the scope of the thesis goes far beyond that. By inserting the event into an interstitial space that is full of potential in Griffintown, it serves as a catalyst in the city for the large social gathering common to sport. In turn, the proposal seeks to give ballpark design new direction while it reconsiders the role of urban events in the twenty-first century.

Eventual architecture puts forth the argument that the ballpark must be reconsidered in today's world, in part by getting back to basics through appropriating an interstitial space as a venue for spectacle and sport. At the same time, it acknowledges the realities and demands of contemporary professional sport while remaining critical of the corporate generating components of modern stadium design. It maintains that the public and the connection to the city play a vital role in its vision.

As has been noted, the contemporary baseball park as an entity is in desperate need of attention. Its forms have stagnated, leading to historical, neo-traditional architecture to mend the blights on the urban scene created in the 1960's by the “cookie-cutter saucer stadium” phenomenon. In doing so, solutions are not being provided, and the future is being put aside. Furthermore, luxury boxes are the main generators of the architecture of stadiums of today, a fact that promotes division of spectators and reveals the underlying corporate goals of sport—objectives so distant from the simple game baseball once was. The architecture of sport—particularly of baseball—needs new direction. The ballpark here proposed turns the convention of twentieth century stadium design on its head. Instead of creating an isolated object in the city, the park emerges from the urban connective tissue in the Griffintown sector of Montreal and engages the infrastructural elements that run as seams through the city. It defies the norms both of what structured private space and pluralistic gathering spaces can be. It will at once serve to facilitate the gathering of people in observance of spectacle and at the same time restructure a part of the city that has been too long underappreciated.

The site for the park is the Peel Basin on the Lachine Canal, the logical extension of the axis that leads west along the canal from Old Montreal and the node that ends the Peel Street axis. As such, it is a point in the city that should be reached in culmination during one's journey through the city rather than be marginalized as it currently exists. While the Bonaventure Expressway and the CN rail lines act as arteries that since their introduction to the Griffintown area have strangled the site from outside contact, incredible potential exists in the space between these elevated lines of transport.

Rather than shunning the old infrastructure, the ballpark uses it as its structuring elements, embedding itself and making connections into the autoroute and rail line. The park thus exists in a symbiotic relationship with them, allowing its program to infiltrate and inhabit the even more marginal spaces underneath these floating transit structures. The seating is designed into and around these gray arteries, creating new relationships for people both toward the event unfolding in their midst and amongst the most inhuman and seemingly unfriendly of infrastructures. A fact that often goes unnoticed is that the site, located at the canal and amid these peculiar concrete masses, is in many ways one of the most beautiful and serene spots in Montreal. The danger is that it remains this way only to the architects in the city, who appreciate such appealingly marginal settings.

The eventual architecture here proposed offers the site to the public as a whole by drawing attention to its splendor and making use of the potential so inherently ripe. The seating and bands of public circulation through the park create new horizons from which to observe the game and afford views to the city as well as to the St. Lawrence River and surrounding 'natural' and industrial landscape. The spaces under the infrastructure become player arrival areas, ticket windows, restaurants, and shopping. In addition, these highway and train line take on a special role in relation to the ballpark, as they both sculpt the space of the field and act as thresholds through which spectators pass in procession to the game. The piers at the end of Peel Street are also incorporated in the design, and activity will spill out onto them before, during, and after games. The goal is to actualize the voided interstice and create a vital node in the city that speaks in cohesive correlation to its neighboring areas. The location of the site enhances the idea of the journey, or ritual experience, that the procession to the park affords as an urban destination. The main procession to the ballpark takes place on the path located between the highway and train line that begins from downtown. This path will be planted with grass for its extremity and will continue to the forecourt of the ballpark, proceed to the field and terminate at the basin's piers. In this way, the green of the field extends through the city itself. Still other axes are of import, such as those running along the canal and along Peel Street.

In quantitative terms the park will accommodate thirty-thousand spectators and play host to a major league baseball team. In addition to the program involved with the game (seating, concessions, ticket booths etc.), a commuter train station will be incorporated along the CN lines to allow access to the park from the surrounding areas. This hybridized typology will lead to new relationships between program, blurring the boundaries of what traditionally belongs to each. At the confluence of the canal, autoroute, and rail lines, the ballpark becomes an entity that is molded, structured by each element, but at the same time reaches out and restructures the basin area, providing not just the field, seating, and train station, but also restaurants and bars, as well as places to dock alongside the canal.

The ballpark is not dominated by corporate needs, luxury boxes, and prestige seats. Instead, as it once was, the game takes place as it was meant to, every spectator being an important participant in the event, enjoying the ritual of sport from the outset of their journey to the game until the end of the spectacle. Glimpses to the field are afforded to passersby, since they are equally vital to the festivities as are the paying participants and the players. The portion of the autoroute nearest the site can be envisioned to close during events of extremely high capacity to literally connect with another layer of the city.

The field is the location of play for eighty-one days/nights during the year. Important to the scheme is the desire to give over the field of play to the public during times when there is no game being played—between games, when the team is on the road, and during the off-season. The park thus remains open to visitors and fans, not only for a few hours during the day (as is typically the case with private stadiums), but can serve as a gathering place at all times. In this way, two events become the prime means of activating the site: the gathering of people for their own pursuits (play/recreation/business lunches/studying) and the event. After the game ends, the field would be given over to the people once more to use: Montreal's nightlife could thereby have a new place to unfold. The park will therefore resonate with visitors all year-round, unlike stadiums of today. The activities incorporated on an under the site (eateries, shops) ensure that it is active—even in the winter—rather than remaining desolate as it is at present. Other programmed events, such as concerts and shows take place at the ballpark, and the bands of circulation through the site offer secondary areas for performances and exhibits, so that multiple events can occur on site as part of larger integrated shows or separate, individual spectacles.

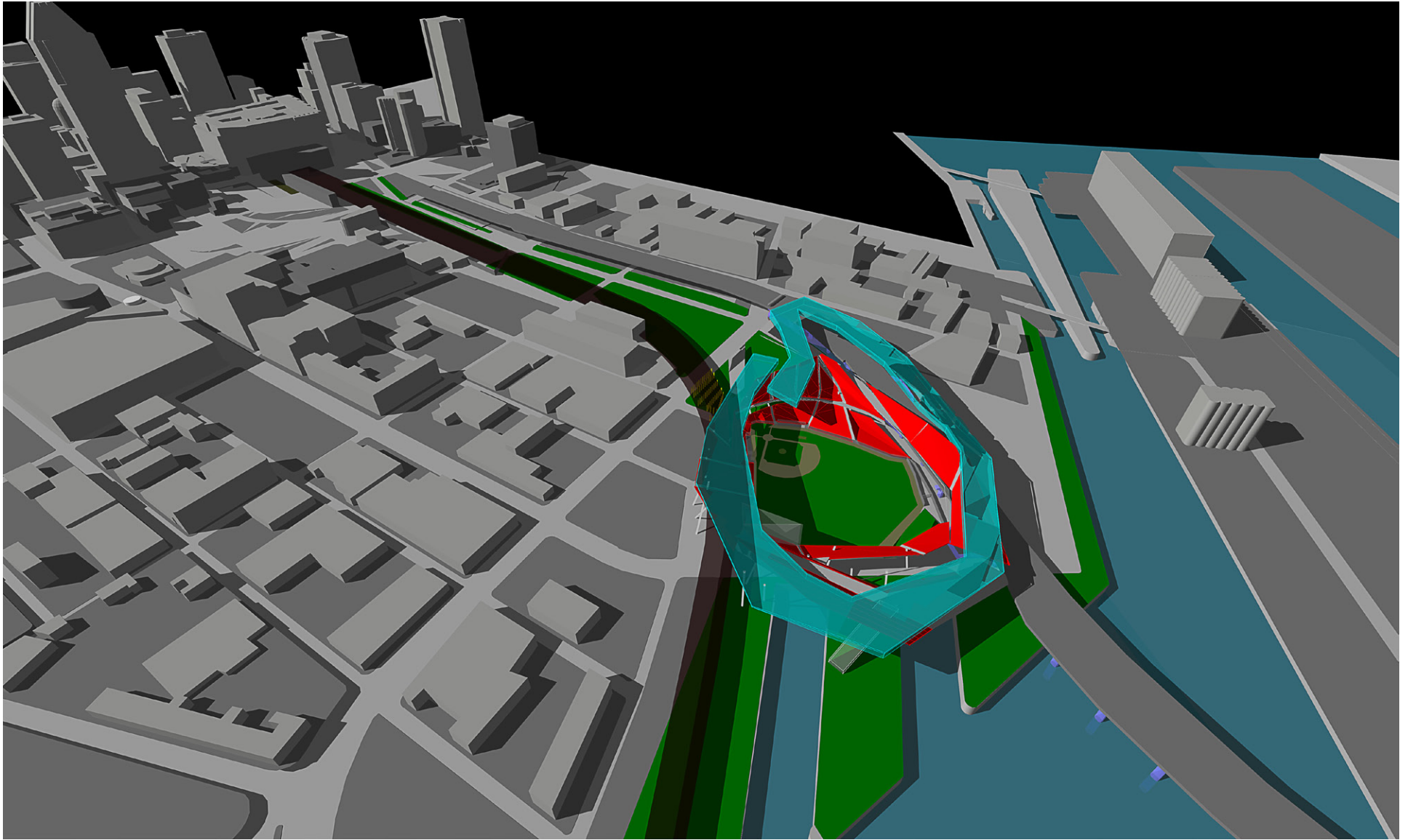
Underneath the field is the digital inverse of the event at hand. Created here has been a zone of virtual inhabitation for fans and observers, as the digital media takes center stage in an immersive environment, where images broadcast from games and other events are received by spectators. New relationships are fostered between player and fan, and glimpses are given into certain player preparation areas. The digital underbelly presents a milieu in which the virtual dimension of the game can be critiqued (through the corporate party room) as well as celebrated by the everyday fan.

The large electronic scoreboard and the canopy for the ballpark, hover above, giving the park a distinct presence in the city from afar and offering Montrealers busily on their way through the city brief glimpses into the world of the event.

A virtual ballpark of the mind: The park creates not just a place, but a world within its confines, whose energy bleeds out into its environs at the foot of Peel Street and into downtown. It encapsulates a vibrant node, a destination that activates the Peel Basin. Ultimately, or shall we say eventually, this thesis is not about precisely prescribed activity, but re-envisioning the exquisite interstice and infrastructure of the city. The event, the focus, enables this restructuring. Baseball is simply the vessel.

Vedanta Balbahadur, M.Arch 2005

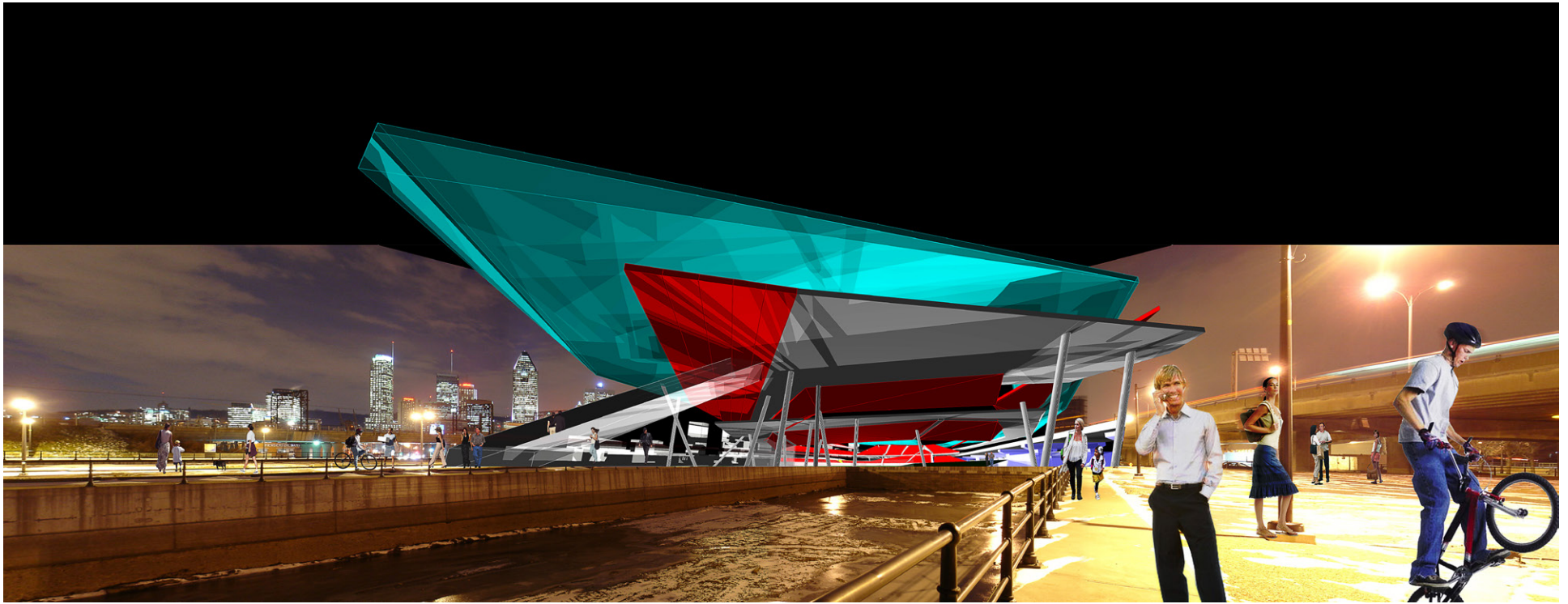
Presented at the Public Consultations
for Griffintown on March 12, 2008



The park was designed as a place for cultural events, social gathering, and as facility for baseball that embraces the historic infrastructure of the area by using existing urban elements to shape the field, stands, concourse, restaurants, shops, and a transit hub.

Aerial view of Vedanta Balbahadur's Peel Basin Ballpark Project and Commuter Train Station designed for his 2005 Professional Masters.





A ballpark initiative that listens carefully to the needs and interests of the local community will set this project apart from stadiums whose focus is on corporate interests instead of the community. Fostering community values and seizing the opportunity for residential and cultural program will allow a new Montreal ballpark to become a model for future stadium design, a bold architectural prototype that sets an example for the rest of the world, both formally and socially.

Montreal should see this initiative as doing local good while effecting change on a global level.

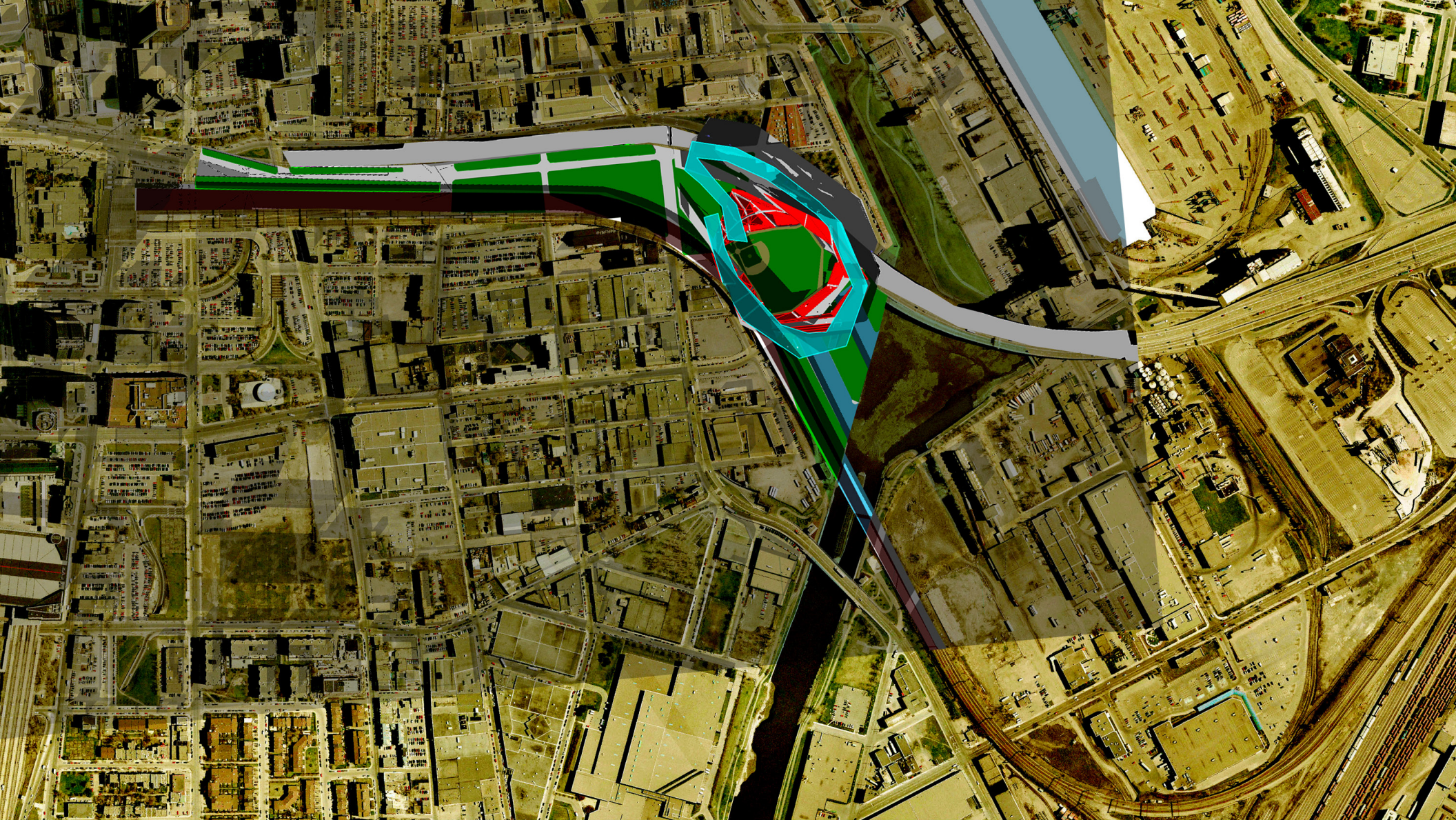
Views from the Peel Bain piers (above) and the Bonaventure Expressway (left) of Vedanta Balbahadur's Peel Basin Ballpark Project and Commuter Train Station designed for his 2005 Professional Masters.



View from the Peel Bain piers of Vedanta Balbahadur's Peel Basin Ballpark Project and Commuter Train Station designed for his 2005 Professional Masters.



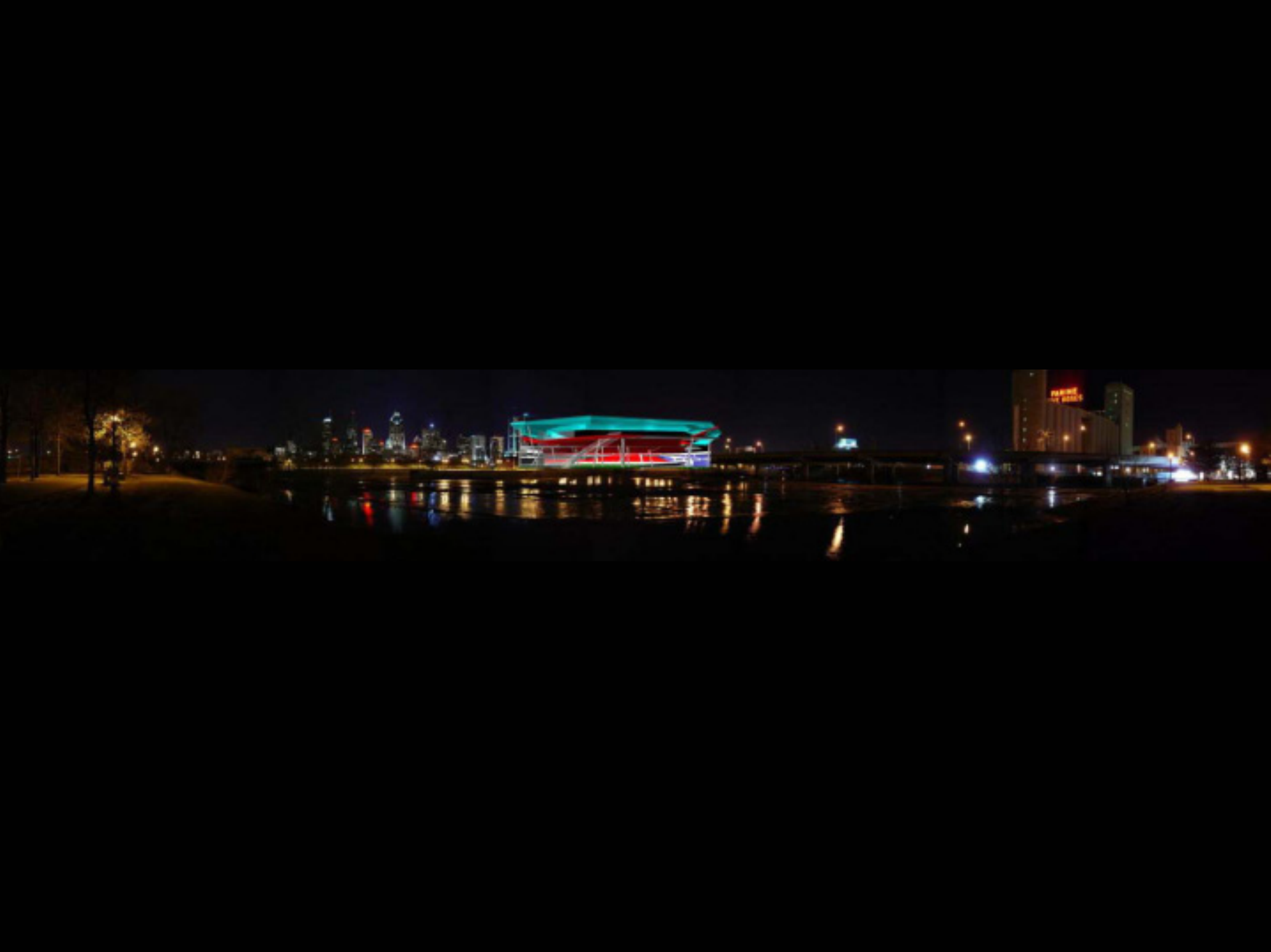


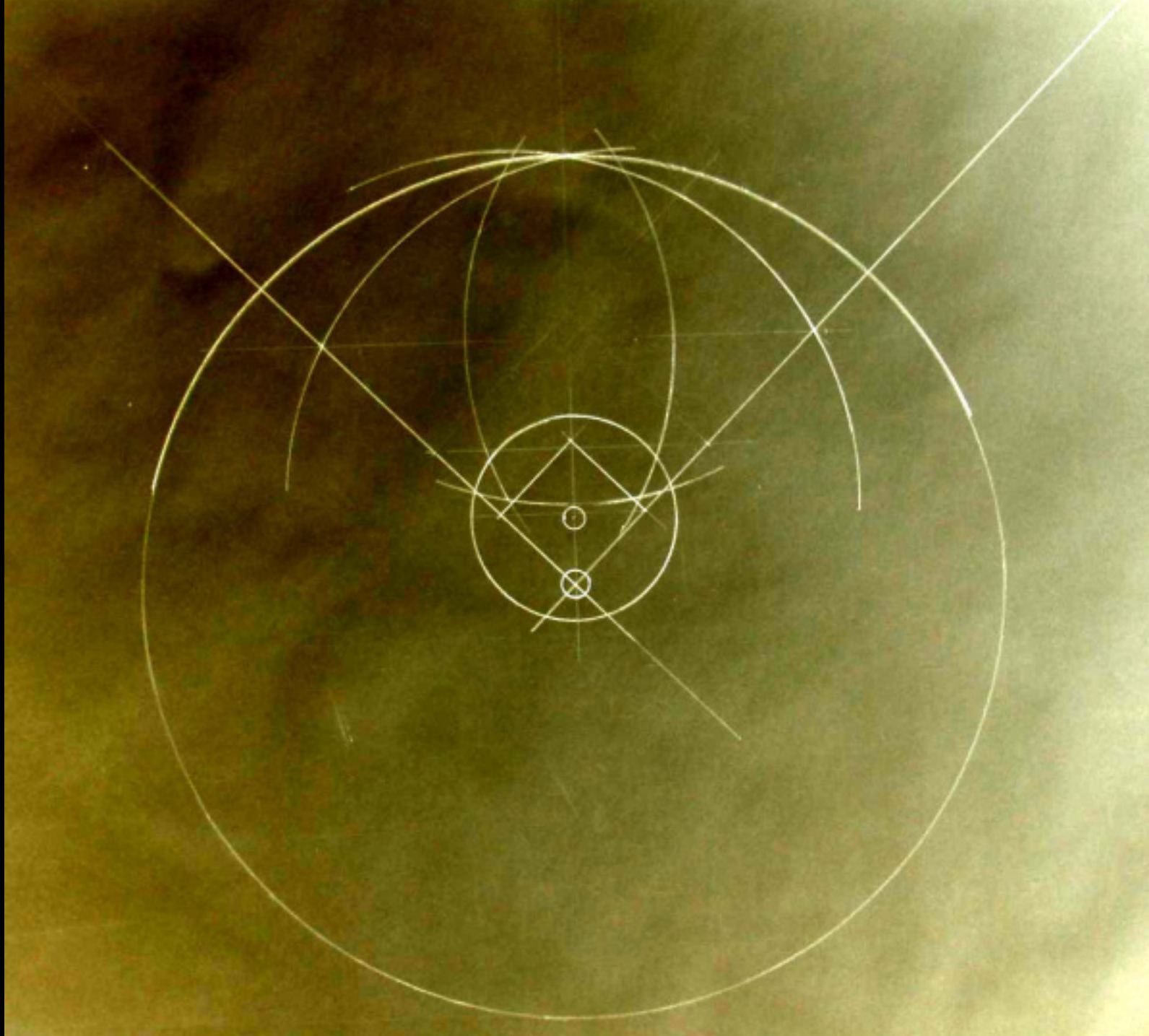


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Satellite image featuring Vedanta Balbahadur's Peel Basin Ballpark Project and Commuter Train Station designed for his 2005 Professional Masters.

The green paths indicate the promenade from downtown toward the site, extending to the piers and Lachine Canal.











SMITH







“Making Their Mark”

Profile on Vedanta Balbahadur and his 2005 ballpark project featured in *Building Magazine* (2005).

making Their Mark

The brightest lights of architecture in Canada all start as young designers fresh out of university and eager to create buildings that look and work better. Over time, they become middle-aged and somewhat less idealistic. However, they may well keep working long past 65, still excited about their profession and each new project. This is not our usual story with a beginning, a middle and an end, but rather only a beginning introduction to some of the new generation of Canadian architects. By Albert Warson

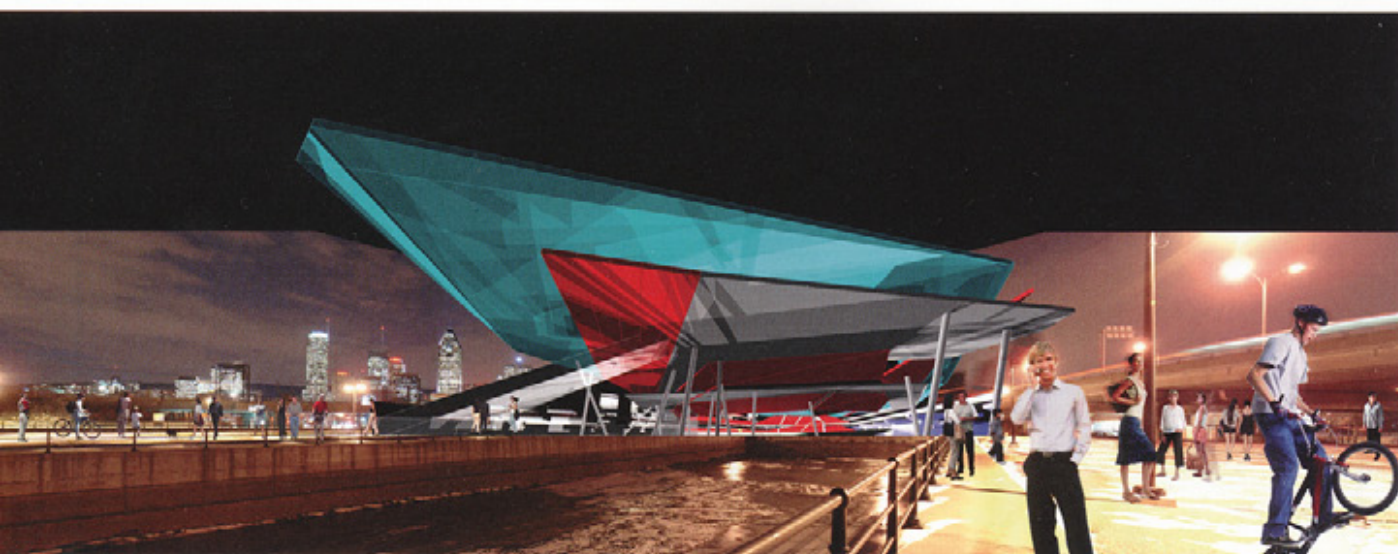
There must be something to the theory that creative thinking keeps one mentally alert, because architects not only tend to live long but often keep working until their deaths. Frank Lloyd Wright was still sketching away when he died at 92. Mies van der Rohe was 83 and Phillip Johnson was 99 when they died, their creative power undiminished.

Today Frank Gehry is hitting his stride at 77. I.M. Pei is still going strong at 89. Canadian architects Bing Thom, Jack Diamond, Douglas Cardinal, Eberhard Zeidler and others in their 60s, 70s and 80s are doing some of their best work.

Lesser known, middle-aged and rising stars are also making their mark. Behind them, barely out of the starting gate, are architects already showing promise. Some of them will likely become well known in due course, some may not.

In a column in the March 29, 2006 issue of *The Globe and Mail*, architectural critic Lisa Rochon lamented the lack of opportunities for the new generation of Canadian architects. She noted: "There's a critical need for young architects. They have the brains and the guts to contribute something important even if it requires enormous personal sacrifice."

Enormous personal sacrifice, it seems, almost always comes with the practice of architecture, regardless of the time invested in that profession. Our goal is to showcase and honour some young architects worth watching.



Vedanta Balbahadur M. Arch

Rendering of a proposed ballpark for Montreal, part of Vedanta Balbahadur's master's thesis.

A graduate of McGill's School of Architecture, Montreal, Bachelor of Science in Architecture degree in 2004 and Masters of Architecture degree in 2005, Vedanta Balbahadur joined Saucier + Perrotte Architects, Montreal, in June, where he is involved in the firm's international design competitions for the Middle East and China, among other projects.

During the summer of 2005, Balbahadur worked at Studio Daniel Libeskind in New York, on design, physical and computer modelling, and computer aided drafting projects. The Montreal firm is one of the most prominent in eastern Canada; Libeskind's studio doesn't need any explanation. Needless to say, both are first-rate places to learn the craft and look great on a bio.

Balbahadur has already won several awards – the Ping Kwan Lau Prize in Architecture, awarded by McGill's School of Architecture to a graduating student for a final design project; the 2005 Royal Canadian Academy of Arts / Eberhard Zeidler Scholarship for Architecture; a 2005 Canadian Centre for Architecture Charrette honourable mention; and others during his earlier years at university.

His master's thesis proposed a ballpark for Montreal on a marginal space between a railway track, the Lachine Canal and the autoroute. He "finds such urban spaces particularly intriguing," and proposed a "hybrid program involving seating and walkways that engaged the surrounding infrastructure," demonstrating "his love of gathering and of sport, in part as an ode to Montreal's departed Expos [baseball team] and partly as an attempt to regain professional baseball in the city."

When there are no games, he visualizes the site as a new place for Montreal nightlife, concerts, shows, performances and exhibits, as part of larger integrated shows or individual spectacles. "Baseball is simply the vessel," he notes.

Balbahadur's passion for his city and baseball surfaces in this observation: "By 2005, much of the vitality once so evident in Montreal had diminished. The city never fully reached the aspirations it set for itself in its Expo [1967] era.

"Professional baseball's departure from Montreal has signaled the loss of one of the last remaining traces of the glory days of the city, a vestige of an important social and cultural artifact in Montreal's history," he notes. His thesis for the proposed ballpark foresees it as "emerging from the urban connective tissue and engaging in the infrastructural elements that run as seams through the city."

In more general, reflective terms, he says: "Architecture must bring out a poetic vision, and at the same time take an ethical stance in society, never following fads, profit, or novelty, but instead contributing to the welfare of the built environment through innovation in design."

