A New Baptism

Reclaiming public space through Light, and Bathing Ritual
for an abandoned church in Montréal

by
Emad Ghattas

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

Québec's historical attachment to Roman Catholicism is visible: there is still a great amount of church buildings throughout the province. However, changing attitudes in Québec (as in other regions around the world) are leading to a chronic desertion of spaces of worship. Conceived as the heart of a community, churches constitute imposing presences in the built and social fabrics of the neighbourhoods they serve. In today's context, this status is shifting, and communities are now striving to somehow re-engage with the churches they have abandoned. However, the sacred nature of these buildings often frames a specific way of looking at them, which can limit a potentially innovative reuse. Given this situation, how can a church be granted anew its status as a public space in a plural environment, thus preserving some of the exceptional qualities of its architecture?

Looking at the case of the abandoned Roman Catholic church Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus in Montréal, this thesis challenges the current approaches to church preservation by converting the building into a bathing space. Characteristic elements of church typology, such as the quality of light and the ritual, are preserved and revised in a contemporary manner, opening the building to a more diverse society. This strategy of valuing intangible elements of church architecture leads to a proposal that demonstrates the responsiveness of this typology and offers ways in which it can regain its role as a space for the public in an increasingly multicultural community, thus challenging the traditional look, both conservationist and the larger public, at a church.

To those who are open to change

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Unless otherwise stated, all photographs and images are by the author.

Québec, with a history spanning more than four hundred years, benefits from a wealth of architectural assets. Its historical attachment to the Roman Catholic Church[1] is evident from toponymy and, most obviously, in the abundance of spaces of worship throughout the province. The quantity not only explains the importance of the practice of cult in a region, but also the significance of architecture to communicate the sacred. Chapels, churches, basilicas, cathedrals and other building types supporting the practice of Roman Catholic rites in Québec can be found in various scales and styles, which greatly enhance the understanding of both time and architecture from a religious and social perspective.

The nature of their conception has imbued sacred buildings with an enormous amount of symbolism and iconographic elements. They are the representation of God and its attributes, translated into architecture. Every element of a church has been designed to communicate this sacred image. Spaces of worship are also characterized as hubs, engaging in relationships with both a network of buildings supporting the church and the life of a community. Today, these existing spaces of worship constantly need to reaffirm themselves in an environment where ecclesiastical building typologies are chronically becoming obsolete in Québec. In parallel, this secularized environment must maintain some sort of relationship with its churches, in order to preserve a valuable collective memory that is quite unique to this province. This condition raises conflicting ideas: between existing buildings and new environments comes the need to compromise and adapt for both entities, where potentially, new opportunities can be found.

Churches were conceived for what was traditionally a majority: the Roman Catholic population. The shift from the

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1   Church with a capital "C" refers to the institution and church with a lower case "c" refers to the building.

traditional homogeneous Christian society to a heterogeneous multicultural environment changes the perception and practice of the sacred, as well as its translation to a space of worship. Not unique to Québec, the Church's withdrawal from political and social power remarkably changed the established perception. In the 1960s, 80% of the population in Québec considered themselves practitioners, and this percentage dramatically dropped to 8% in 1996.[2] This decrease in church attendances would eventually lead to the abandonment of spaces of worship, disassociating such imposing typologies from both social and urban environments that are constantly changing. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, 90 churches all over the province were demolished. From this number, 70 were located in Montréal including 24 of Roman Catholic denomination.[3]

Recognizing their presence and significance in the Québec landscape, how can our present time re-engage with abandoned spaces of worship?

Looking at a particular case in Montréal, the abandoned Roman Catholic church of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve district, fell victim to a lack of attendance and closed its doors in 2009. Up to this day no successful solution has been approved, due in part by a lack of financial resources from the community and the Church and an apprehensiveness to follow a different design path. The conservative mentality limits the possibilities for churches to accommodate a whole range of programs geared towards enhancing public space and valuing exceptional qualities of their typologies.

The relationship between a church building and the community needs to be re-imagined before it can be enhanced. Embarking on a quest to allow Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus to recover its initial status as a community hub, this thesis challenges the established mentality about church preservation in Montréal.

2   Noppen, *Les églises du Québec*, p.50
3   Bernier, "La conversion des églises à Montréal", p.46

Looking beyond the building envelope to find intangible values to church architecture, such as the unique quality of light, the architectural organization to experience a ritual and the public usage of the building, this thesis seeks to convert Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus into a space for bathing and gathering. This daring proposal places a focus on the symbolic meaning of water to clean, purify and gather, re-imagining the rituals performed in a church building and reviving an exciting culture of public bathing as one with which today's public can closely engage. However, it relies on the existing architecture's responsiveness to this new programmatic idea by carefully performing architectural interventions on the building. This proposed strategy places the bathing program at the centre of the design process, where the existing architecture must respond to its needs. This method contrasts with the current way of thinking about church preservation, where the existing building condition informs the design process and resists all exciting programmatic possibilities, appropriate for churches. As any adaptive reuse endeavours, the bath proposal requires compromises and adjustments from both building and site for a successful implementation within a new multicultural context.

This thesis, leading to a design proposal, is organized in three sections. The first part looks at the historical and social context of the province of Québec in relation with the Roman Catholic Church, in order to understand the architecture created from this relationship. The section explains the origins and severity of church abandonment, then looking towards the future and envisioning a potential solution. Secondly, I narrate my experience at the abandoned church of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, where significant features, spatial qualities, relationships between architecture and ritual and references to symbolisms are explored. The surrounding neighbourhood is also assessed and visited. Thirdly, the previous investigations inspire a direction to change the church towards a space for bathing.

Contrasts and relationships between religion and spirituality, body and water, praying and bathing are analysed in order to create a powerful bathing experience that integrates ideas of ritual, light and public space.

As the principal goal is to re-establish the link with the community, this thesis attempts to break away from a conventional attitude of preservation and propose a new idea of what a church can become in a secular and plural society.

God is dead.

– Friedrich Nietzsche

Socio-historical context in Québec

Among the many aspects distinguishing the province of Québec from the rest of Canada, the most obvious would be its French heritage, which explains in great part its difference in politics, administration, legal system, language, culture, morals and most importantly, religion. Beginning nearly four centuries ago as a colony of France, the political environment shifted from a French establishment to an English one following the British Conquest of 1759. Although this significant event condemned the French speaking population to assimilation, they were legally entitled to preserve elements of their heritage, such as language, the civil law system and religion. This extremely important aspect in the history of Québec is crucial in understanding how these particular rights, in majority fought for, are inseparable from the identity of the *Québécois* today.

Establishment of the Church

Prior to the British Conquest (the period known as the *Ancien Régime* (old Regime)), the province was under French rule. In Montréal, the Sulpicians, a Catholic order originating from France, arrived in Ville-Marie (today Montréal) in 1657 and were granted the administration of the island. Not men religious by practice,[4] the Sulpicians were considered businessmen as they managed and developed the land, entrusted to them by the founder: Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve (Fig. 1.1). As the Sulpicians belonged to an ecclesiastical society, it is evident that a development of institutions with a religious connotation occurred. These institutions established the practice of a Christian faith in the colony and the education of the First

Fig.1.1. Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve, founder of Montréal

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4 Ferretti, *Brève histoire de l'Église catholique*, p.199
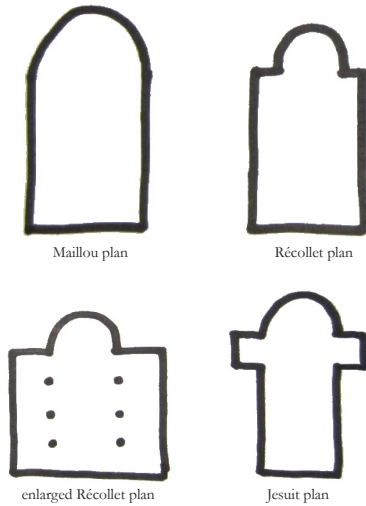
Fig.1.2. Common church floor plans in Quebec

Maillou plan

Récollet plan

enlarged Récollet plan

Jesuit plan

Nativité de la B.V.M. d'Hochelaga

Notre-Dame

Fig.1.3. Montréal parishes after 1866. (Nativité de la B.V.M. d'Hochelaga is created in the East of Montreal)

Fig.1.4. Monseigneur Ignace Bourget

Nations through missionaries. Already, the presence of the sacred is omnipresent in toponyms: Ville-Marie, Notre-Dame, Hôtel-Dieu and the various roads named after saints and men and women of the ecclesiastical class.

Preceding the British Conquest of 1759 during the period known as the *Ancien Régime,* inhabitants designed their buildings with the French style adapted to a Canadian context. Wood and stone, widely available, were the main building materials. In Québec, three church plan configurations, named after the order who established the church, were commonly used: the Maillou, Récollet and Jesuit models, the first two being the earliest models in Québec (Fig.1.2). The differences in each model lie in the relationship between the nave (the main body of the church) and the chancel (the space where the priest preaches). The Maillou model shows no distinction between the nave and the chancel, the Récollet plan narrows the chancel and permits two side altars. An enlarged version of the latter plan accommodates a greater number of parishioners by extending the nave laterally. The Jesuit model introduces a transept, giving room for two side chapels and forming a Latin cross in plan view. This evolution in plan configuration shows a constant adjustment for more space, in response to a growing number of people practicing the religion. Additionally, parishes in New France became fiscal districts, following the seigniorial regime. Residents, all assumed Catholics, were taxed proportionally based on their territorial possession to fund ecclesiastical construction as well as the priests and ministers that would later serve them. This period in the *Ancien Regime* shows the inhabitants' involvement with their ecclesiastical buildings, from conception forward, a continuously preserved legacy. Architecture (in this case religious) and society are indissoluble.

Up until 1866, the historical limits of the city of Montréal, despite a population of about 99 000 people[5] only had one

5   www.imtl.org. This number is obtained by extrapolation (Accessed August 27th 2012)

recognized parish (Notre-Dame) within a larger ecclesiastical structure (the diocese of Montréal) founded in 1836 and comprising of land extending far beyond the island (Fig.1.3). Bishop Ignace Bourget (Fig.1.4), carrying on an initial battle from his predecessor, received approval from Rome to fragment the current parish into smaller pastoral districts within the city of Montréal.[6] This decisive event, diminishing the Sulpicians' power, triggered the construction of a great number of churches. The famous and local Montréal grey limestone was the primary building material used as masonry load-bearing walls. A mix of classical and gothic revival styles influenced ecclesiastical architecture during this construction period, which slowed down in the 1930s with the Great Depression (Fig.1.5). The effect on the urban landscape was so significant, it grabbed the attention of American writer Mark Twain when he wrote in 1881: "This is the first time I was ever in a city where you couldn't throw a brick without breaking a church window. Yet I was told that you were going to build more."[7] From this period originates the famous nickname given to Montréal: *La ville aux cent clochers* (The city of a hundred bell towers). The story of the church of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus begins during this period, considered a Golden Age for church construction.
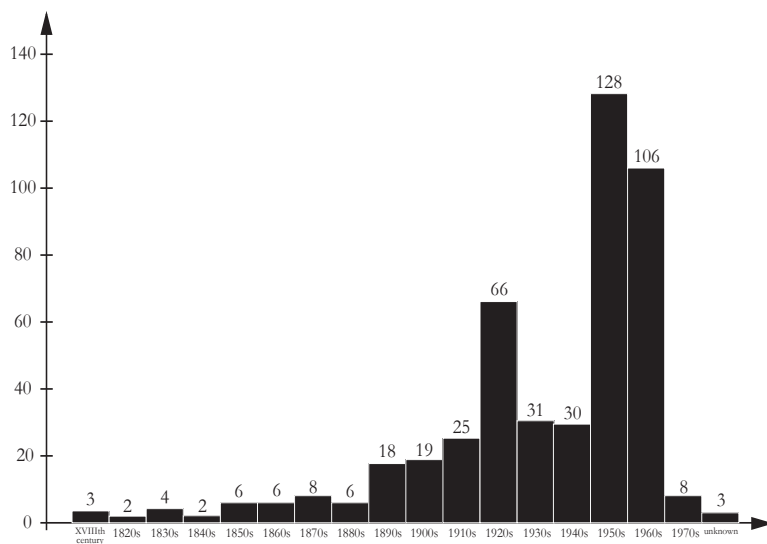
Fig.1.5.   Church construction in Québec, by decade

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6   Ferretti, *Brève histoire de l'Église catholique*, p. 80.
7   Twain, "Ronald T. Harvie" December 10th 1881

Fig.1.6.   Paul-Émile Borduas' *Refus Global* (1948)
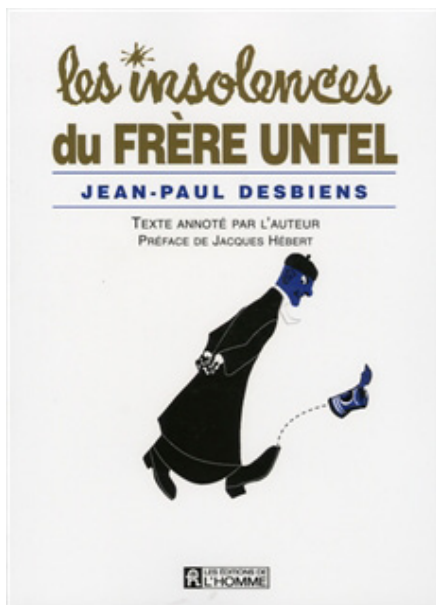
Fig.1.7.   Jean-Paul Desbiens' *Les Insolences du Frère Untel* (1960)

In the years following the Second World War, with the rise of urbanisation and increase in population Québec focused on health, education and social services, all of which under the care and control of the Church.[8] Itself becoming slowly incapable of fulfilling its functions, the Church started hiring lay personnel.[9] From this point, the durability of this institution begins to fail but remains important within Québec society. In 1948, the painter Paul-Émile Borduas portrayed a society "asphyxiated" as well as controlled and over-conservative, dominated by the doctrines of an established and archaic system: the Catholic Church.[10] This depiction was elaborated into a famous manifesto, signed by other of Borduas' contemporaries, called *Refus Global* (Fig.1.6) and rang a significant alarm sparking a cultural and intellectual enlightenment in Québec. In addition to this manifesto, within this spirit of change, a satirical novel (*Les Insolences du Frère Untel* – The Impertinences of Brother Anonymous, Fig.1.7), published in 1960, critiqued the poor quality of education in Québec, which is reflected in the title and cover of the publication. Despite the Church's tarnished image, its predominance was secured, both in the social sphere, where it powerfully dictated the values and morals of Québec society and also the political sphere under Maurice Duplessis' authoritative government supporting this organization (Fig.1.8). In the Québec of the 1950s, Church and State were cooperating with each other while taking care of their respective fields in the province. In this decade, a growing population following World War 2, the migration of parishioners from the city to the suburbs (giving birth to suburban developments) and the strong influence of the Church on Québec society are factors ranking the period of the 1950s with the most churches ever built in the history of Québec (Fig.1.5). Emerging values

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8 Ferretti, *Brève histoire de l'Église catholique*, p. 145
9 Ibid., p. 145
10   Ibid., p. 147

of autonomy and individualism, raised mainly through the manifesto, conflict with the traditional values of an "intensely communal practice" taught by the Church.[11] This divergence of values influenced mainly the youth population, which began to slowly lose interest in ecclesiastical matters and stop attending masses. Despite this, Duplessis' government supported the clergy in its dictatorship of traditional values (Fig.1.9).

> *In the mid fifties, most Quebecers attended Sunday mass, celebrated sacred holidays and followed lent. It was common to stay a virgin until marriage and live with the parents prior to being wed. It was forbidden and completely immoral to give birth to a child before marriage. Within a span of a few years, in 1959, these social and moral principles were forgotten. Churches were emptied.[12]*

Fig.1.8.   Maurice Duplessis (1952)

Québec society therefore stayed in this "asphyxiated" environment, later referred as the *Grande Noirceur* (Great Darkness) until Maurice Duplessis' death in 1959, which coincided with the beginning of, finally, the province's modernization period: *La Révolution Tranquille* (The Quiet Revolution).

This "revolution" was not only a means to catch up with its fellow provinces on all spheres of government, but also an opportunity for Québec to question the role of the Church in the new state. The creation of the Ministry of Education in 1964, released the clergy from its long-established responsibility of teaching in schools. This secularization of education consequently eroded the Church's teaching power and contributed to the dramatic change of people's attitude and attachment towards the Church. Although the 1950s showed a record of church construction, the exodus of parishioners to the suburbs, while filling new and modern churches around

Fig.1.9.   Maurice Duplessis with Mgr. Joseph Charbonneau (1955)

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11 Ferretti, *Brève histoire de l'Église catholique*, p. 143
12 Beauchemin. *La Révolution Tranquille en héritage,* p.248 (trans. by the author)

the periphery of cities[13] emptied churches in the city centres, resulting in the increase of redundant churches.

The status of church architecture

185 — in use

170 — converted

70 — demolished

Fig.1.10. Proportion of inventoried churches (425) in Montréal

13 Bergeron, *L'Architecture des églises du Québec*, p.10

The Church (in Québec) is currently in a fragile position. Recent revelations of past atrocities involving the Catholic Church (sexual abuses by priests of young children[14] and inhuman treatments in Aboriginal Residential Schools in Canada[15]) as well as conservative positions on issues such as contraception, abortion and same-sex unions diminished the institution's defensibility and rendered the Church less popular to an increasingly liberal population. In Québec, as is the case in many regions around the world, church attendance is significantly dropping (from 80% of the population in the 1960s to 8% in the 1990s), generating less income, placing the Church in an alarming financial situation and resulting in an inability to take care of, in part, its spaces of worship, which require important sums of money for their maintenance. This situation has been ongoing since the 1960s, but reached a peak in the second half of the 1990s[16] with the rise of churches closing and put for sale. Fig. 1.10 offers a portrait of church construction, conversion and demolition in Montréal. From a total of 425 churches (excluding chapels) inventoried throughout Montréal, 240 changed vocations, from which 70 are now gone. This issue is further explained in Fig.1.11 and Fig.1.12.

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14 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_sex_abuse_cases (Accessed September 27th 2012)
15 http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/residential-schools (Accessed September 27th 2012)
16 Groulx, "Le temps d'agir", p. 2

Fig.1.11. Churches converted in Montréal, by period
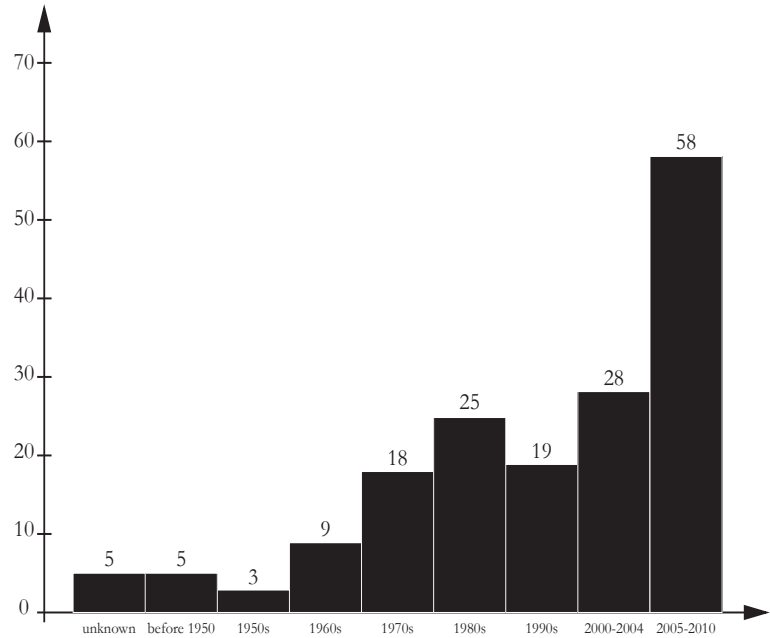
The first graphic distributes the current 170 converted churches in Montréal in the time periods in which they were adapted to a new use. The second shows the same issue, at the scale of the province of Québec. Both graphics reveal a similar trend: a growing number of spaces of worship that will face a conversion in the near future, calling for an emerging need to take action. Unfortunately, when a church is not granted a new use, its abandonment leads to demolition. The growing concern of church abandonment brings communities together in a desire to preserve religious architectural heritage. Publications, workshops, public consultations and other means to bring awareness to the population have been put in place in recent times to keep the discussion flowing and find potential solutions, in a manner adapted to each community's objectives, needs and capabilities. This thesis attempts to contribute to this discussion, by taking a different approach of reuse.
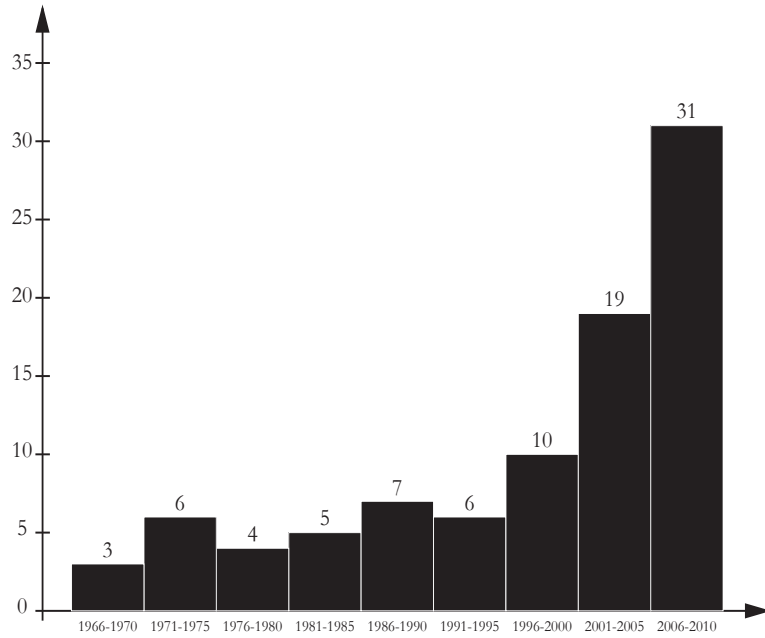
Fig.1.12. Churches converted throughout Québec, by period

Understanding the current context where Québec churches stand is necessary to grasp the vulnerability of these spaces of worship if they remain inflexible to changing environments. Even if churches are facing abandonment due to a province-wide disinterest in religious affairs, there are qualities that can be remembered from the experience of a space of worship. Such remembrance is valuable for the preservation of a significant building typology in a unique province, which could still contribute in the enhancement of public space and community gatherings. Failure to recognize the contribution of churches in both social and urban fabrics would result in forfeiting a noteworthy heritage in cultural identity. Exploring the church investigates in depth the abandoned church Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus in order to assess exceptional qualities of ecclesiastical architecture and find, through experience, values to be preserved, enhanced and reimagined.

A church reminds us of what we have known. And it tells us that the possibility of the door swinging open again remains.

– Margaret Visser

A church, in its most elemental definition, is the House of God. Depending on the tradition and each denomination of Christianity, a church may represent the House of God (*Domus Dei* in Latin) and may even be perceived as the House of the institution of the Church (*Domus ecclesiae* in Latin). These different perceptions of a church shift the focus of the building, from the house of a single deity to a gathering space for an entire religious community (also known as a parish). Regardless of the way one sees a church, the potency of this typology is reflected clearly and symbolically through architecture. Christians would construct beautiful buildings of imposing scale and elaborate ornamentation dedicated to God. Craftsmanship is the best quality man can give to God's house and differentiates how religious architecture (for God) is built in contrast with profane architecture.[17]

The journey in Rome: deconsecrated churches in the Eternal City

My visits of churches in Rome enhanced my understanding and appreciation of religious architecture, where Roman Catholic churches, by their architecture and their location in the urban fabric, successfully influence the public and urban life of its inhabitants. Already with a topic and a site in mind, I travelled to Rome mostly to explore cases of church reuse in the Eternal City. Although most churches are still in use, the amount that changed functions is impressive, and beyond
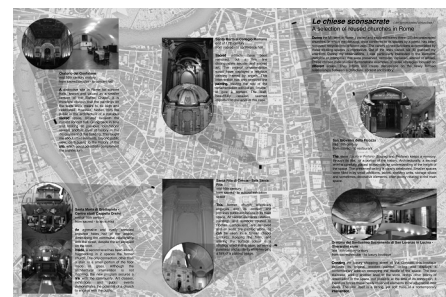
Fig.2.1.   Le chiese sconsacrate di Roma (Deconsecrated churches in Rome): a summary of the M1 term (see zooms in the following pages)

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17 Bergeron, *L'Architecture des églises du Québec*, p.11
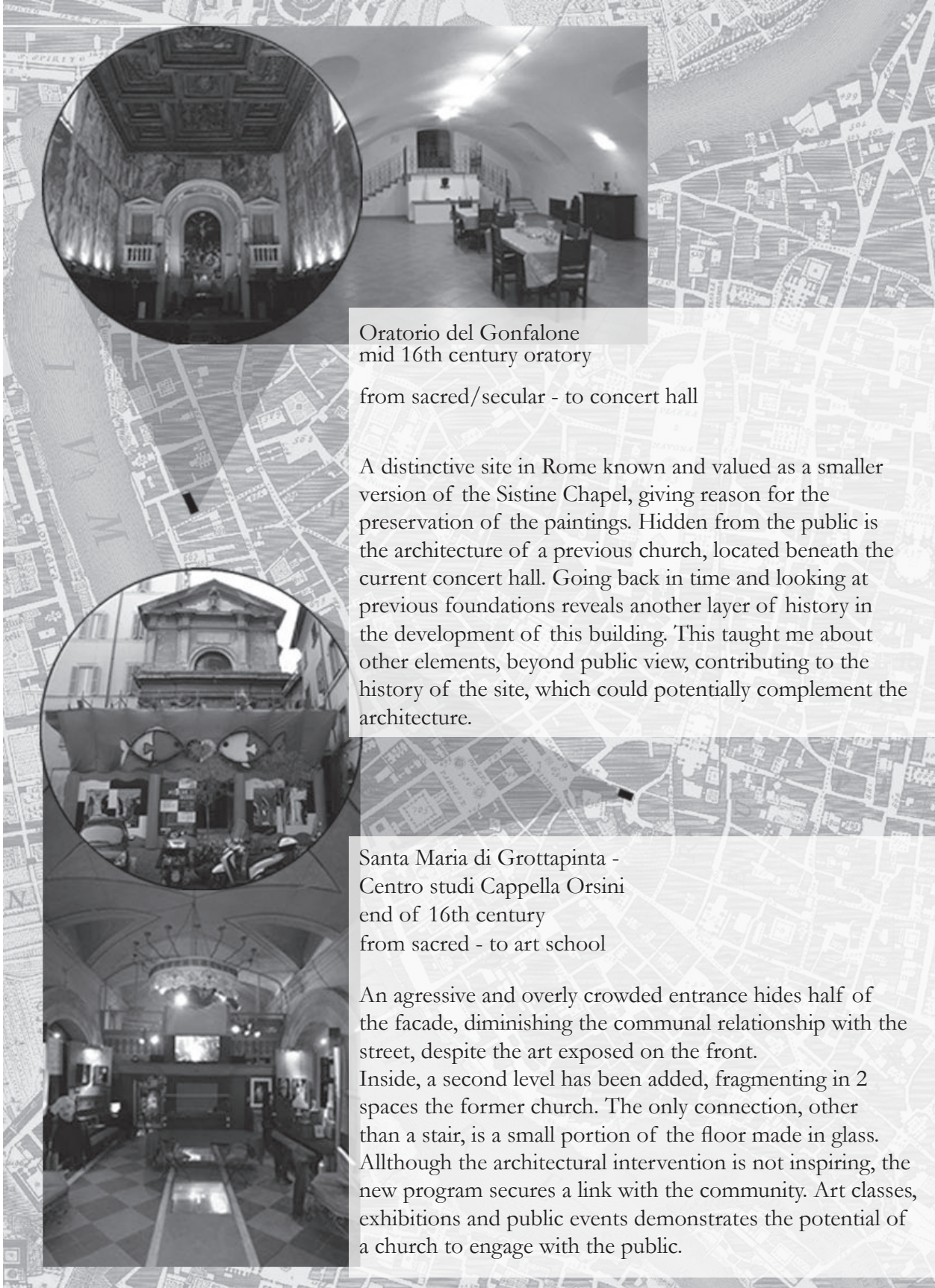
Oratorio del Gonfalone
mid 16th century oratory

from sacred/secular - to concert hall

A distinctive site in Rome known and valued as a smaller
version of the Sistine Chapel, giving reason for the
preservation of the paintings. Hidden from the public is
the architecture of a previous church, located beneath the
current concert hall. Going back in time and looking at
previous foundations reveals another layer of history in
the development of this building. This taught me about
other elements, beyond public view, contributing to the
history of the site, which could potentially complement the
architecture.

Santa Maria di Grottapinta -
Centro studi Cappella Orsini
end of 16th century
from sacred - to art school

An agressive and overly crowded entrance hides half of
the facade, diminishing the communal relationship with the
street, despite the art exposed on the front.
Inside, a second level has been added, fragmenting in 2
spaces the former church. The only connection, other
than a stair, is a small portion of the floor made in glass.
Allthough the architectural intervention is not inspiring, the
new program secures a link with the community. Art classes,
exhibitions and public events demonstrates the potential of
a church to engage with the public.
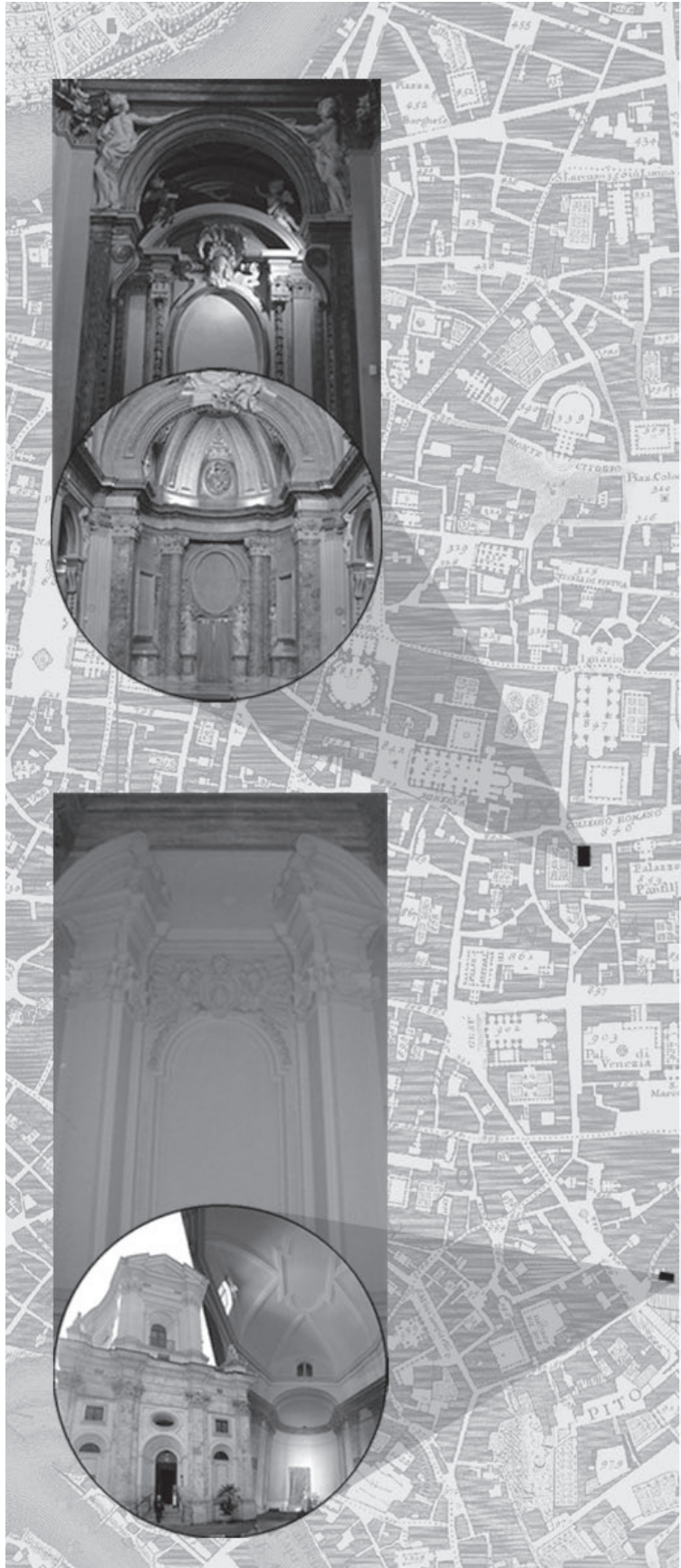
Santa Marta al Collegio Romano
end of 17th century
from sacred - to conference hall

Sacred artifacts have been removed, but a fine line distinguishes secular and sacred art. The reuse into a conference hall only removed religious paintings, leaving the rest of the ornamentation without an "image" to give a context. The craft, beautifully detailed, seemed important to preserve in this building since it did not disrupt the new use of the space. The location of the church at the edge of a large piazza (of the same name) enhances its visibility and use as a public space, where its urban value as a landmark and meeting space, within the piazza, is celebrated.

Santa Rita di Cascia - Sala Santa Rita
mid 16th century
from sacred - to cultural exhibition space

This former church effectively engages with its context and provides public exhibitions in its main space. Religious artifacts, such as statues and paintings, have been removed and all walls are painted white. Keeping the form, and altering the surface colour places light in an austere and pure context, rather than one with an abundance of ornamentation. In this case, the interior space of a former church can still be evocative without its initial artefacts.

13

San Giovanni della Ficozza
mid 19th century
from sacred - to restaurant

Renaming the space Sacro e Profano
(Sacred and Profane) humorously
preserves the idea of a church
through the title. Inside, an added
mezzanine level is carefully placed
to understand the height of the
space. The preserved ceiling is
clearly celebrated, as it is the focus
of the dining space. Smaller spaces
were filled in by small additions:
tables, shelving units, storage space
and decorations. These elements,
necessary to support a restaurant
usage, are often poorly integrated
into the main space.

Oratorio del Santissimo Sacramento di San Lorenzo in Lucina - Gherardini store
late 16th century oratory
from sacred/secular - to luxury boutique

Crossing the luxury shopping street of Via Condotti, this boutique exposes its original wooden
painted ceiling and displays a contemporary staircase addition occupying the middle of the space.
This intervention brings other points of observation in the space, forcing some surfaces to adapt
to closer views. The stair itself is a strong, yet soft trace of a contemporary intervention, since
the focus of the space remains the wood ceiling. The sacred nature of a church is, however, lost
within the luxury shoping experience

my initial expectation. From research, I found twenty-three deconsecrated spaces of worship (basilicas, churches, oratories), from which six grabbed my attention. My interest lied in the elements (tangible and intangible) preserved, removed, replaced, added or altered. These chosen case studies demonstrate modest examples of re-use strategies applied at different scales and for different purposes. The interventions inform and create discussions on the newly formed relationships with the context and the means in which the change actually takes full potential of the architecture to engage with the city on a human scale (Fig. 2.1).

In my initial observations in Rome, I was more interested in the physical change and responsiveness to the new function than the use itself. The uses that can be accommodated in a church typology are numerous, based on what was presented in Rome but not all of them celebrated the architecture of a space of worship. In a country that invests heavily in its architectural heritage, it is not surprising to face a conservative mentality in preservation, one requiring the building envelope to be conserved as much as possible. To illustrate an example of this mindset, the owner of a small abandoned corner oratory in Trastevere, found unthinkable the idea of removing the altarpiece from its original location (Fig. 2.2). This attitude sparked my interest to break away from these restrictions limiting the ability of such valuable typologies to be meaningful once again in the urban fabric.

These observations informed my experiences back home in the North American continent, to assess the means in which the sacred (and the communal life) is communicated through architecture.

Fig.2.2.   Inside an oratory in Trastevere with the untouchable altarpiece

The journey in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve: the church of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus

On June 18th 2012, and again on October 5th 2012, I was granted special permission to visit the church of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus. Given its abandoned and deconsecrated state, feelings of sympathy arose, but the building's continuous ability to communicate grandeur and light is the breath that may bring the building back to an assembly use. However, determining the kind of life a former church can embody can be a sensitive and even controversial topic. Nevertheless, before venturing into this investigation, one must carefully explore the church, understand its design, appreciate its features and, most importantly, recognize the unique elements enriching the architecture and the immediate environment, so that their preservation in a future context maintain the building in connection with its surroundings. This exercise may also reveal potentials of church architecture for a contemporary secularized society, which might not have been considered at conception. From this perspective, understanding the church is essential before attempting to re-imagine the building, and I shall do this by narration, describing my journey as a ritual and unfolding thoughts as I visited the abandoned church of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus.

My experience started when I stepped out of the Pie-IX subway station and walked south towards the site. Ahead on rue Desjardins, a very calm one-way street, the church was already obvious at a distance (Fig.2.3). From this point of view, Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus clearly stands as a landmark in the neighbourhood, first by height seen from a distance, and by volume, in comparison to the other buildings in the vicinity. The walk leading towards the church was a good moment to review the historical context in which Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus was born;

Fig.2.3.   Ahead from Pie-IX (2012)

Fig.2.4.   Bibliothèque Maisonneuve (2012)

Fig.2.5.   Marché Maisonneuve (2012)

Fig.2.6.   Bains Morgan (2012)

Fig.2.7.   Old chapel of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus (c.1889)

The church stands in a neighbourhood with a history dating back to 1883, when the city of Maisonneuve was created to oppose an annexation to the greater city of Montréal. The location next to the port of the Saint Lawrence River and proximity to the Pacific Railway greatly contributed to the neighbourhood's industrial potential.[18] Within a few years of the construction of port infrastructure and the establishment of tax exemptions for businesses,[19] the city quickly became prosperous and was coined the "Pittsburgh of Canada"[20] From this context of prosperity, Maisonneuve flourished architecturally, as can be seen by nearby civic buildings still standing today: Molson Bank (1906), Toronto-Dominion Bank (1911), Bibliothèque Maisonneuve (1912, Fig.2.4), Marché Maisonneuve (1914, Fig.2.5), Bains Morgan (1916, Fig.2.6) and more. The "City Beautiful" Movement, in vogue at the time, greatly inspired the urban planning of Maisonneuve, a challenge at the time given its predominantly industrial character and proletarian population. The established parish in *Hochelaga* (adjacent to the city of Maionneuve) was growing in population: the need of a new pastoral community with its own church was imminent. In 1888, members of the long established parish Nativité de la Très-Sainte-Vierge d'Hochelaga asked for a parish closer to the five year-old city of Maisonneuve.[21] A need to build a bigger church, to replace the existing and inadequate temporary wood chapel (Fig. 2.7) was an opportunity to construct a "Cathedral to the East" (of Montréal) and echo the prosperity of the city into a space of worship.

Ever since Maisonneuve's creation, founders were persistently optimistic about the prosperity of the new city. However, with the First World War complicating the economy in addition to the heavy debts accumulated from overly ambitious and rapidly executed projects, the city fused with Montréal in

18   Marsan, *Montréal en évolution*, p.198
19   Ménard, *Cent ans d'histoire*, p.11
20   The term is in reference to Pittsburgh as being the leading steel industry in the United States during this period.
21   Ménard, *Cent ans d'histoire*, p. 1

Montreal. Maisonneuve.

Fig.2.8. (left) Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus in 1909

Fig.2.9. (right) Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus in 2012

1918. Paradoxically, during World War I, the church evolved differently in comparison to its city. While Maisonneuve faced stagnation and lower productivity, its church received lushious treatment: decorative oil paintings mounted on canvases and its famous Casavant organs.[22]

The heritage of Maisonneuve's "Golden Age", spanning roughly three decades, has been left mainly in architecture. While notable civic buildings from this period continue to be accessible to the public today, the church of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus has not.

Indeed, the prosperity of the new city would reflect the design for its new church. The high copper belltowers drew my attention towards the sky, the intention being that these

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22 Ménard, *Cent ans d'histoire*, p. 65

Fig.2.10. Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome, Italy

Fig.2.11. Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus in 2012, closed

belltowers would point towards the Heavens and God. If I can see them, then the church can see me:[23] this panoptic quality of the building gives a sense of protection to the individual and to the community as a whole and gives the height of the building an urban value. The height and craftsmanship of the belltowers (and of the church as a whole) are proportional to the former wealth of the city. The present belltowers are not the original ones: they are classical 1929 replacements of a previous neo-baroque style installed in 1911 (Fig.2.8 and Fig.2.9). These towers once housed a series of five bells from the Paccardi foundry in Annecy, Haute-Savoie (France).[24] Bells were a means to call parishioners towards the church, as a reminder for mass and other sacred occasions. They announced significant events: weddings, baptisms, funerals, and other celebrations. They also mark time: from my personal experience living in Rome, the bells of Santa Maria in Trastevere (Fig.2.10) ring every quarter hour which frames time and organizes people's social and religious lives around the sound. Today, as it is commonly practiced with abandoned churches, the bells at Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus have been removed, stripping the ability of the church to voice its presence in the area and to reach to the senses. Despite this loss, the building conserved its urban value: its height in the discreet skyline of the neighbourhood solidly marks the church as a *point de repère*.

After assessing the church from a distance and grasping its prominance at sky level, my focus narrowed on the building itself.

Although I did not experience the church by entering it the traditional way as the entrance is currently fenced off (Fig.2.11), I am not foreign to this entrance experience. I imagined it standing from rue Adam, facing the principal entrance to the church located at the *piano nobile* level: two wide set of flights of concrete stairs impose themselves in front of the main door (Fig.2.12). Because the church is the House of God and the

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23 Stemp, *The Secret Language of Churches & Cathedral*, p. 15
24 Ménard, *Cent ans d'histoire*, p. 23

place of Heaven on Earth, ascending to the entrance further emphasizes this perception, where climbing to a higher level contrasts with the profane realm at street level. The ample space in front of the church, the *parvis*, is wide enough to receive a great number of people. In fact, during its conception in 1905, with 1800 families under the care of the parish,[25] a front space that can accommodate such numbers was necessary. Although the parvis is lifeless today, I can imagine the various uses it once had: a place to converse after mass, an occasion to meet someone, to discuss with fellow parishioners or even a platform to take wedding pictures. Regardless of the event, the parvis is a point of departure, a point of arrival and a point of greeting, where the public nature of the church is introduced. Nowadays, the inactivity of the building it faces reduces this prime space to a no man's land.

The façade of the church shows one grand door, flanked by two secondary entrances, themselves bordered by two other doors (leading to a smaller vestibule to reach the bell towers). The word "façade", is French and contains the word "face". It also comes from the Italian verb "facere", to make. By reading the façade, which by definition *makes* the rest of a building,[26] I should expect a large aisle bordered by two side aisles as the organization of the ground floor, an hypothesis to be confirmed upon entrance. Built between 1903 and 1906 out of the local Montréal grey limestone, the church, taking 5000 square meters of the ground, was considered modern
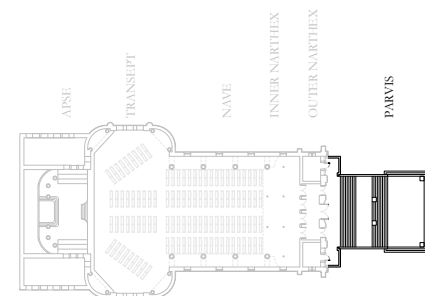
25 Ibid., p.11
26 McNamara, *How to read churches*, p. 146
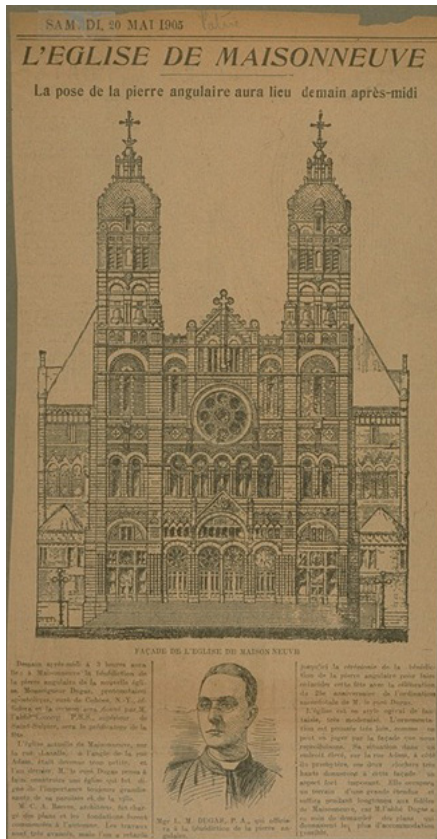
Fig.2.13. L'Église de Maisonneuve, 1905 article

at its conception. A provincial newspaper article (Fig.2.13) published in 1905 states:

> *L'église est en style ogival de fantaisie , très modernisé. L'ornementation est poussée très loin, comme on peut en juger par la façade que nous reproduisons*
> (The church is of a very modernized "fantasy ogival" style. The ornamentation is very rich and generous, as can be judged by the reproduced façade.)[27]

Designed by local architects Albert Ménard and Charles Aimée Reeves, the façade shows signs of Romanesque inspiration, as seen in the semi-circular shapes for window and door openings. Excessive, and if I may add, frivolous detailing is apparent, which could be associated with the spirit of prosperity at the time. The entire church is symmetrical, characteristic of Beaux-Arts, the architectural style in vogue at the time. The entrance is an extremely important element in church architecture as it indicates a significant threshold.

> The door that opens on the interior of the church actually signifies a solution of continuity. The threshold that separates the two spaces also indicates the distance between two modes of being, the profane and the religious. The threshold is the limit, the boundary, the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds – and at the same time the paradoxical place where those worlds communicate, where passage from the profane to the sacred world become possible.[28]

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27   Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.
28   Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p.25

Fig.2.14. Triumphal Arch of Constantine, Rome, Italy

If the church is considered as "Heaven on Earth", the main entrance is therefore the "Gates to Heaven", a victorious entryway towards the "House of God", suggested on the façade with an inspiration from the Triumphal Arch of Constantine in Rome (Fig.2.14), a typical model in the design of church entries.[29] A similar entry treatment is applied on the façade of Alberti's Santa Maria Novella, in Florence (Fig.2.15) and to Baroque façades, such as Giacomo della Porta and Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola's Church of the Gesù, in Rome (Fig.2.16). Going forward would mean preparing myself, at the door, to be presentable, physically and spiritually, before entering.

I arrived at the brick building adjacent to the north side of the church to meet with the janitor, who let me in (see West Elevation, Fig. 2.43). This modest-looking building seemed like a later addition, but a quick research reveals that, as early as 1914, a wood frame construction with brick veneer (A) was present directly north of the stone church, also linking a former college (C) (Fig.2.17). Historical maps further uncover that this building once connected the church with a former convent to the north (B), and later in time, it tied with a boy's school (D) on the same block (Fig.2.18). In this 1946 map, Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus is completed as a hub when the presbytery (E) physically joins the church, a network summarized in Fig.2.19.

Fig.2.15. Santa Maria Novella, Florence, Italy (Leon Battista Alberti, 1470)

Fig.2.16. Church of the Gesù, Rome, Italy (Giacomo della Porta and Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, 1584)

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29 McNamara, *How to read churches,* p. 148

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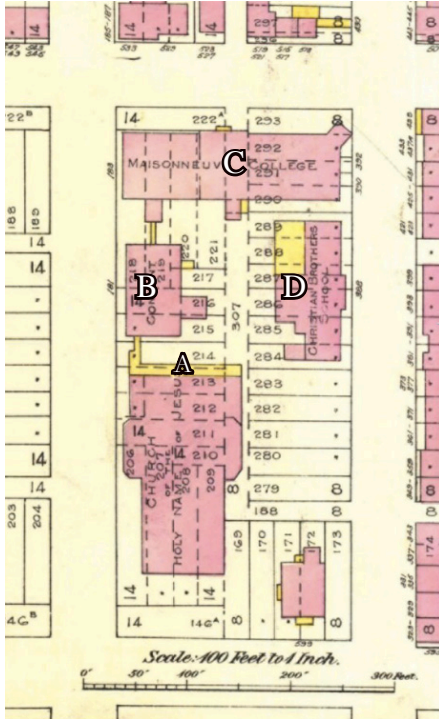
Fig.2.17. Historical map of church neighborhood (Goad, 1914)

Fig.2.18. Historical map of church neighbourhood (Insurance Plan, City of Montreal, 1946)

Fig.2.19. Diagram showing the church as the hub within the neighbourhood's network
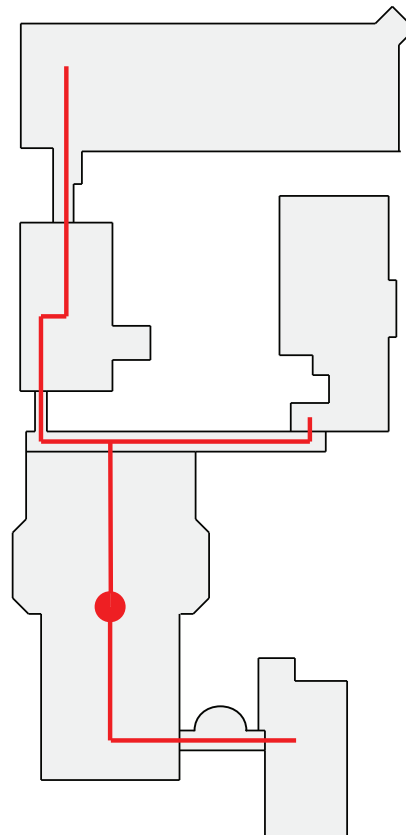
My entrance point was therefore a former transition building between housing, education and sacred worship, which today, in the absence of its role as a connector, appears dull.

As I followed the janitor inside this building, it only took a minute before entering, abruptly, into the magnificent worship space from the north side of the west transept. There was no preparation or signal before stepping inside the space, and the "awe moment" was not as incredible as it could have been if it was experienced through the traditional means of entering a church. Nonetheless, feelings of amazement and sympathy arose about how to react to the space that was presented to me.

The experience of a space (and especially a sacred space) is very personal. Certainly, regardless of the mode of entry, an effect will occur. However, it remained important and crucial,

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in the understanding and explanation of this church, to alter my journey and cheat by walking towards the vestibule, as if I had entered through the main door, and to briefly postpone the main space's description.

The current vestibule (or to use proper ecclesiastical terms, the outer narthex) did not inspire any particular emotion. The transition zone between the "Gates of Heaven" and the narthex, in this case, simply displayed a plain beige paint over a plaster finish on its walls and a slanted ceiling. The four coloured *tetris* pattern floor seemed more appropriate for a bathroom rather than a church's antechamber (Fig.2.20). Needless to say, I could imagine my slight disappointment if I had passed through the main entrance to experience this space. But again, as a transition zone, the focus of the architecture lies beyond the doors leading towards the inner narthex. Four doors lead to the next space (the inner narthex). The consistency with the original exterior entryway is only evident in this room.

Once in the inner narthex, I paused there briefly. This low-ceiling room stands underneath a first balcony level above and displays richer finishes compared to the previous room (the outer narthex), a sign of the end of a transition zone (Fig.2.21). The only section of the church free of seating (or in ecclesiastical terms, pews) the narthex is still not considered, according to its traditional use, a sacred space. Early Christian churches reserved the narthex as a transitional space for recently converted Christians, as they were not allowed inside the main body of the church before baptism.[30] This temporary space was a motivation to move closer towards the assembly, where beauty and light meet. The shift from narthex to nave is made clear by the change of ceiling height. Still under the balcony, the low ceiling was clearly obstructing the view I was about to experience (Fig.2.22). Assessing the floor organization, clear from this point of sight, I recalled a previous lesson regarding church facades and felt a small deception: the three aisles, expected from the outside, are not as clearly laid out as

Fig.2.20. Outer Narthex

Fig.2.21. Inner Narthex

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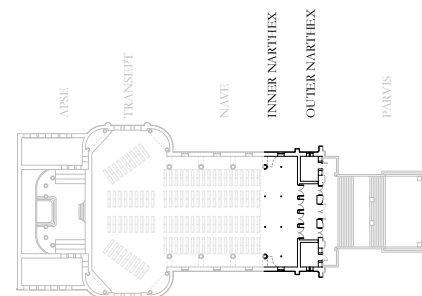
30   Stemp, *The Secret Language of Churches & Cathedrals*, p.25

I have imagined. Somehow, either the floor plan or the façade is inconsistent and the two elements do not correspond. The vinyl flooring, a noticeable addition from the 1960s, is not an attention-grabbing element. This 1960s floor treatment[31] does not contribute to the beauty and understanding of the space, which is very unfortunate given the inherent meanings of floor design in traditional church architecture. Moving forward, suddenly, the weight of the low-ceiling disappeared and I found myself, finally in the middle of a space that spoke to me: the nave (Fig.2.22).

Fig.2.22. View towards the apse:
obstructed by the tribune above (left) and
unobstructed (right)

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31   **Ménard,** *Cent ans d'histoire,* p.17

The nave of a church, the heart of a congregation, carries an enormous amount of symbolism and constitutes perhaps the most fundamental space in ecclesiastical typologies. The etymology of the word sparks this fascination: originating from the Latin *navis*, meaning "ship", the nave is compared to a vessel transporting a congregation on a journey through life, where the vessel acts as a protective instrument amid the uncertainty and tempest of the outside profane world.[32] The nave is closely paralleled with the biblical story of Noah's Ark, where the Patriarch Noah received the message from God to prepare a vessel that will carry himself, his family, and the rest of the world's animals in order to save mankind from destruction (Fig.2.23). The vessel, Noah's Ark, becomes the space that saved mankind, which is analogous to the significance of the nave of a church. This symbolic comparison relates to the current issue today. If the "destruction of mankind" can be, to some degree, associated with the increased secularization of the state, how can the community be saved, and what role does the nave of a church play in this salvation?

Associations with maritime symbolisms are very present in church design and are even made explicit, such as the nave resembling the inside of a ship at St Henry's Ecumenical Art Chapel in Finland (Fig.2.24). In our case, the nave did not bear a physical trace of such symbolism; nevertheless, the quality of the space, despite its slight derelict physical condition, is breathtaking. Looking beyond the interior decorative features, I decoded the impression of standing in the middle of a sacred space designed for a large assembly, forgetting for an instant its unfortunate abandoned state. This effect on me illustrated the communicative power of this church even in its deconsecrated condition. Pews of natural wood, dating from 1960, are rigorously organized along four rows and dictate the linear circulation flow inside the church. In early churches, no seating was available: its introduction came after the Reformation in

Fig.2.23. Noah's Ark, by Edward Hicks, 1846
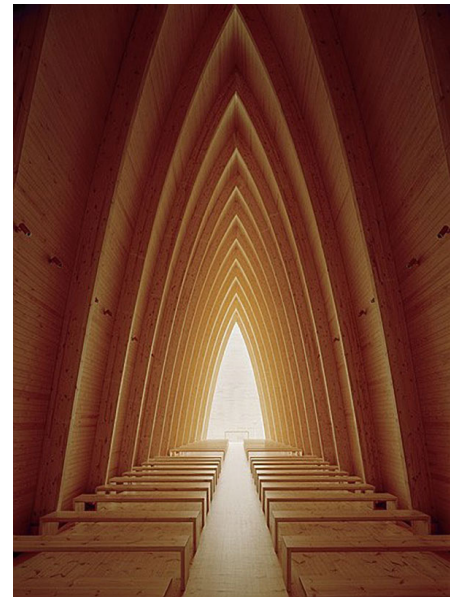
Fig.2.24. St. Henry's Ecumenical Art Chapel, Turku, Finland
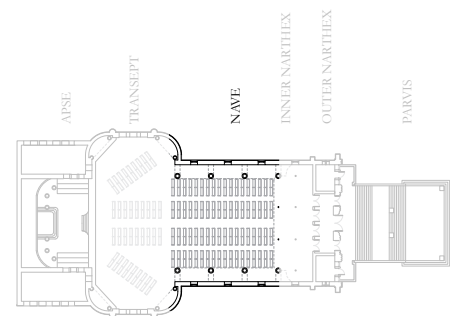
32 Stemp, *The Secret Language of Churches & Cathedral*, p.40

(1)

(2)

(3)

Fig.2.25. Examples of paintings inisde the church: The Nativity (1), the The Resurection (2), The Pentecost (3). The latter painting is attributed to Georges Delfosse.

the XVIth century, to aid concentration.[33] Pews were boxed-off and sold to families, enabling the Church to partly finance itself through the privatization of its seating.[34] Through this means, attendances were tracked, and consequently, parishioners were judged in the event of an absence.

If Albert Ménard and Charles Aimée Reeves received credit for the architecture of the building, the elaborate interior decoration is largely attributed to Toussaint-Xénophon Renaud, a prominent ecclesiastical artist who decorated a great number of churches in Québec, Ontario and New England. The decoration consists of a series of oil paintings on canvases, affixed to a plaster surface[35] on either wooden laths (themselves affixed to a concrete wall) or directly to the concrete wall.[36] These paintings (Fig.2.25) were installed between 1914 and 1918 inside a church that looked substantially different than the one standing today (Fig.2.26 and Fig.2.27).
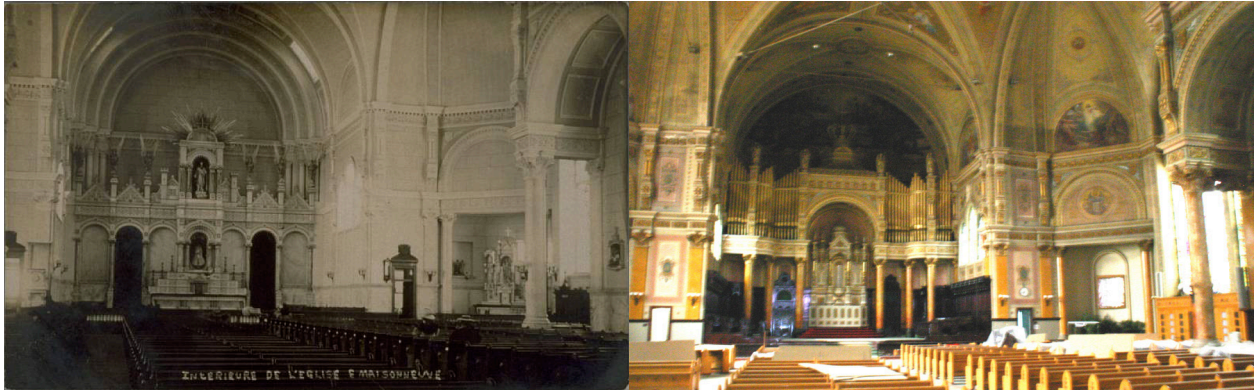
Fig.2.26. (left)Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus - interior, pre-organ installation (before 1914)

Fig.2.27. (right)Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus - interior, 2012

33 Ibid., p.56
34 Ibid.
35 Ménard, *Cent ans d'histoire*, p.81
36 Arts & Architecture, "Évaluation des dommages et rapport technique", 8 avril 2008

An important feature of church architecture is its ability to communicate the sacred. In early churches, displays of paintings, images, sculptures and other forms of art illustrate key moments in the history of Christianity, to educate illiterate parishioners.[37] The Christian faith relies heavily on iconography (especially in Roman Catholicism), as opposed to Islam and Judaism, which use visual references more abstractly inside their spaces of worship.[38] In the case of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, the interior reads as an illustrated Bible, with paintings on its walls and ceilings. As a non-practicing Catholic in this space who recognizes the meaning behind the artwork, I remain to this day overwhelmed by the intensity of the information displayed on nearly all of the surfaces. It contrasted deeply with a previous experience inside a Lutheran church in Copenhagen (Fig.2.28), which brought me to comprehend the distinctive features of Roman Catholic churches. The Grundtvig church in Copenhagen expresses the faith strongly through its structure: the purity and austerity of the vertical lines succeeded at directing my attention to a higher level. The church is also a great example of the expression of the nave's etymology. On the other hand, at Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, the artwork, although beautifully crafted, imposes itself on me rather than allowing me to open to it, fostering a small feeling of oppression.

Fig.2.28. Grundtvig kirke, Copenhagen, Denmark (2010)
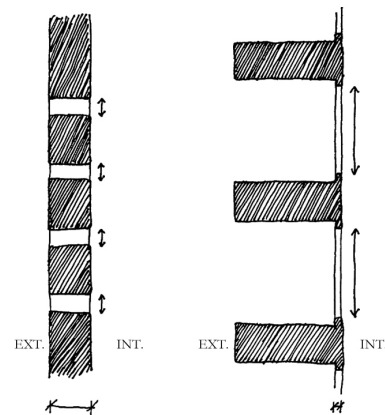
Fig.2.29. Evolution of exterior masonry wall for church architecture. On the left, pre-Medieval times where the load is carried by the wall. On the right, buttresses carry the load to the ground, resulting in thinner masonry walls allowing wider openings.

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37   Stemp, *The Secret Language of Churches & Cathedrals*, p.68
38   Ibid.

Light is an extremely important element integrated in the design of sacred spaces in general. It is the primary factor in placing a church on site, where typically the building needs to face west to receive in the sanctuary the rising morning sun, coming from the east. Over time, church builders accommodated the structure to permit the passage of as much light as possible through its heavy masonry walls. Medieval builders added massive buttresses on the exterior face, freeing the exterior walls from the burden of carrying the loads and allowing them to have wider openings (Fig.2.29) and permit more light to enter the space, examples of which are widely found in Europe. This structural innovation explains in part the importance of light in church architecture. "I Am the Light of the World":[39] an expression attributed to Jesus Christ, inspires interior lighting design. Windows show their best attributes inside a space: when they filter the outer light, it creates a powerful and tangible message, reinforced when the glass is coloured (stained glass). From inside, when the light hits one stained glass window, it is God who passes through the image and illuminates it (by taking the qualities of the colour in the glass), as if the image delivers God's message.[40] This is a powerful experience, and it is still expressed inside the church (Fig.2.30).

In addition to its symbolism, the stained glass in this church has a fascinating background. During World War I, France issued a requisiton to prevent its lead from leaving the country. Despite this law, stained glass windows (containing lead) from Limoges, France were shipped to Montréal for the church of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, causing a scandal at its arrival at the port.[41] This risky move shows how important the stained glass windows were for the prestige of the church during this tense time in history.

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39 John 8:12
40 Stemp, *The Secret Language of Churches & Cathedrals*, p.36
41 **Ménard**, *Cent ans d'histoire*, p. 77

Fig.2.30. Light coming from the stained glass windows
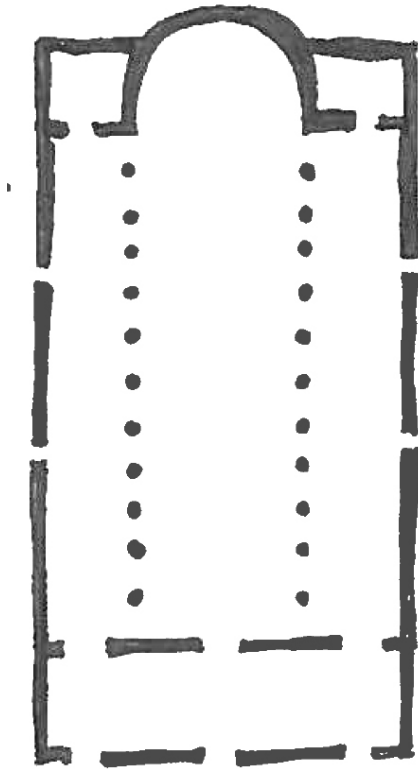
Fig.2.31. Typical basilica type plan

Moving forward in my journey inside the church, I arrived at the intersection of the nave and the transept: the physical heart of the church. The word "transept" comes from the Latin *transeptum*, a combination of *trans* (across) and of *septum* (enclosure). The transept therefore is a perpendicular prolongation to the nave, improving the flow (entrances from the transept are common in many churches). In plan view, the transept completes the illustration of a latin cross, symbol of Christianity. The fascinating origin of the transept dates back to the Roman Empire. Prior to the birth of Christianity, pagan temples followed the basilica typology. In plan, it consists of a single nave ending with a semi-circular apse (Fig.2.31). The Maillou and Récollet models, commonly used in Québec, closely adopt the plan of an early basilica, at a significantly different scale. When Christianity rose (and the need to congregate), the basilica model (applied to pagan temples) was favoured as a meeting space to accommodate the practice of the new religion. This choice of typology was not only functional, but also political: it "reflected the splendour of the Empire and its divine ruler; as a tool of political-architectural propaganda, they were thus close to the realm of the State religion."[42] During a difficult period leading to the fall of the Roman Empire, citizens were heavily exploited through taxes eventually impoverishing the State, where membership in the Christian clergy was the only way to escape this tax.[43] Following this exemption, applications for ordination increased and churches needed to accommodate the raising number of clergymen.
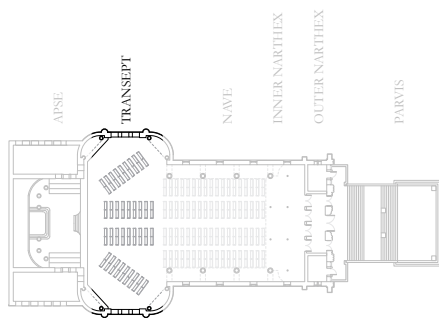
42 Krautheimer, "The Constantinian Basilica", p.123
43 Prentice, *The Heritage of the Cathedral*, p.40
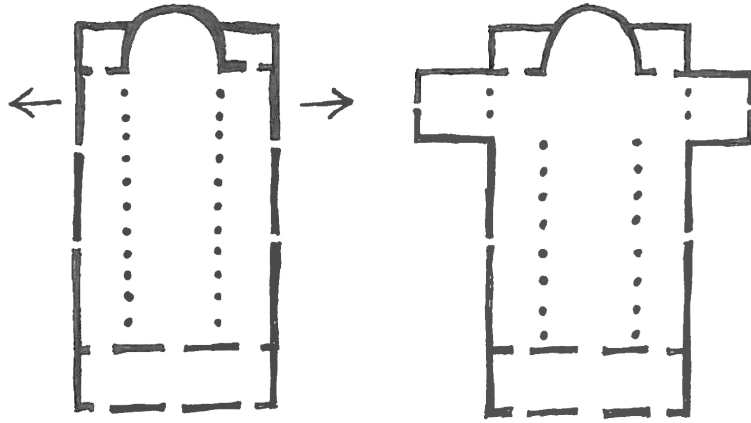
Fig.2.32. Evolution of the typical basilica type plan to accomodate the transept

It was to provide space for an inceasing clergy that the transepts were created, sometimes by adding wings to the chancel so as to give the basilica the shape of the letter "T" but more and more frequently by extending the transverse aisle between the nave and the chancel through and beyond the side walls of the building (Fig.2.32). By means of these new wings of this now cruciform church all the priests, wherever seated, could be gathered equally near the altar which stood in the centre of the Crossing, between the aisles and the apse.[44]

The significance of the cross in the plan goes beyond the resemblance to the symbol of Christianity:

Thus, the popular belief that the cruciform church perpetuated the memory of a cross is true, but the cross from which the transepts sprang is not that which was raised on Calvary; it is the cross on which the economic incapacity of Rome crucified its own citizens and subjects; and our familiar church, with its aisles and transepts, bears witness through the years to the folly of a nation which, having gained the whole world, lost all that she had won because, while she had the power to rule, she lacked the will to serve.[45]

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44   Ibid., p.41
45   Ibid., p.42

Fig.2.33. (left) Apse (pre-closure)

Fig.2.34. (right) Apse (2012)

Furthermore, the transepts possibly accomodated a choir, adding to the flexibility of these newly added elements.[46] The origin of the transept is therefore in response to a political and social crisis of a time rather than to provide a symbolic reading in plan of a church.

From this point of view, a total of nine tie-rods, added in 1965, are visible in strategic points at ceiling level to stabilize the arches in the ceiling and the masonry clerestory. A feature canvas has fallen off from its original ceiling location at the centre of the transept (Fig.2.33 and Fig.2.34) most likely caused by water infiltration inside weakening the bonding strength of the glue. This oil on canvas depicts God the Father holding the symbol of Redemption (Fig.2.35) and is no longer at its original place on the ceiling. This drop can be perceived both physically and metaphorically; the weakening of the church as a building and, in parallel the weakening of the Church as an institution, a reality in Québec society.

Fig.2.35. Fallen canvas of God the Father

46 Ibid., p.43

At the end of the walk, beyond the transept, the most sacred part of a church is the focal point of the interior where the priest preaches and prays: the sanctuary, also known as the apse or the chancel. Strictly reserved for the clergy and his party, the area is distinguished from the rest by its elevated platform bounded by a low wooden railing, used as an arm's rest for the praying position. The altar, the table where the weekly sacraments are performed is also located on that elevated platform, for the whole congregation to see. An significant event made a change in the ritual, altering the symbolism of the apse and the altar. The Second Vatican Council (known as Vatican II), from 1962 to 1965, concluded with a number of reforms that would "modernize" Roman Catholicism. These changes, mostly affecting liturgy, include alterations on the architecture. After Vatican II, the priest faces his congregation rather than turning his back to it. Traditionally, where the priest would act as the head of the ship, leading the congregation to salvation (by facing the apse), the reform, asking for an about-turn on behalf of the priest, abolished this image. This change in the practice of liturgy also shifted the placement of the altar, from adjacent to the back wall to the centre of the apse. The significant change lies, however, in the symbolism of the apse.

Fig.2.36. Apse close-up (pre-closure)

Fig.2.37. Apse close-up (2012)

The sanctuary in Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus was stripped of its furnishing and sacred instruments when it was declared abandoned in 2009, but is still crowned with the pipes of the Casavant[47] organ and a painting depicting the Pentecost, behind and above the musical instrument. Before the closing, the sanctuary displayed an overwhelming arragement of religious splendour (Fig.2.36), mirroring the conveyed image of the richness and beauty of Heaven on Earth. Ironically, this sought-for destination is designed, decorated and displayed in a way to make anyone hesitant to linger in its vicinity, forcing a spiritual and physical separation between the congreagation

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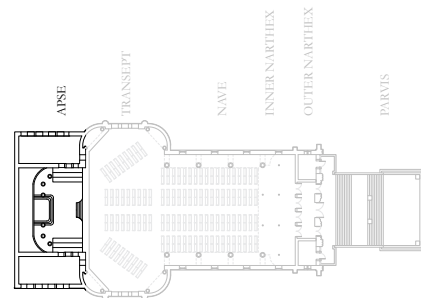
47   Maison Casavant is a company, in Sainte-Hyacinthe, Québec, internationally known for fabricating organs.

and the sanctuary. The removal of the sacred furnishings erased this boundary (Fig.2.37).

From this moment inside the church, having explored what is left of the elevated sanctuary, I turn around and look back at all I have explored and described previously. Enjoying the view perceived from the altar (Fig.2.38), I encounter two balcony levels used to accommodate more people in the congregation, but most importantly, and arguably the jewel of the entire church, the Casavant organs.

Installed in 1915, this musical instrument was, at the time, the biggest in Montréal and among the largest in Canada.[48] It has retained its status as one of the most imposing organ in the country, competing even on the international level.[49] The pipes are spread out at both ends of the church: at the balcony level, visible from the altar looking back, and right above the sanctuary. Together, they form an instrument giving accoustical value to the space. The organ's impressive size, sound quality and succesive financial investments for its maintenance over the years (arguments for its upkeep and protection) can be viewed in two ways. First, it can be the primary reason to keep the church, or, it can be viewed as an immense burden towards the evolution of the church, which is discussed furter in the chapter CHANGING THE CHURCH. As I exited the church, I had to walk back towards the entry point at the north-western side of the transept, which is not the original public entrance. Normally (and I have imagined it at the moment), I would have passed through all the spaces previously experienced, back towards the nave, the inner and outer narthexes and descending the imposing stairs towards the *parvis*. Having experienced and congregated inside a "House of God", I would see the profane world anew, and pursue discussions with fellow parishioners. The bells high above would ring the end of a mass or any other celebration, were a proud feeling of being part of such a gathering would rise. To leave a church is as meaningful as

48 Ménard, *Cent ans d'histoire*, p. 71
49 Croteau, *Les belles églises du Québec*, p.152

to enter one, and once I have passed the threshold towards the profane realm, I began to look around the neighbourhood in which Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus played a central role in communal life.

Fig.2.38. View towards the narthex from the apse

A walk around the neighbourhood

Pavillon d'éducation communautaire
(Community Education Centre)

Habitation à loyer modique
Low-to-mid income housing

Maison des Aînés
Senior's Residence

École Saint-Nom-de-Jésus
Elementary School

Fig.2.39. Area of interest map

Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus presently stands in the third largest borough (out of nineteen) in the city of Montréal. Officially named Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (but colloquially referred as Hochelaga-Maisonneuve or the more familiar "HoMa"), the borough holds, as of 2012, a population of 131 483 residents[50] and is divided into four districts. Hochelaga, the district where the church is located, is composed of mainly French Canadians, and as one of the poorest in the borough and of Montréal, Hochelaga is known for its less wealthy households and relatively higher unemployment rates. Despite its gloomy social and economical climate, the borough of Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve inherited impressive architectural assets. Between the 1960s and 1970s, the exodus to the suburbs, the creation of the Ville-Marie highway (displacing a great amount of families and demolishing a significant portion of the built landscape) and the arrival of

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50   *Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneiuve – Acceuil*, (http://ville.Montréal.qc.ca/), accessed August 8, 2012.

immigrants of various backgrounds[51] changed the atmosphere in and around the parish of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus.

To the right of the church is a recessed, one-storey transition building separating a slightly more prominent, four-storey presbytery (see south elevations, Fig.2.40). These buildings were necessary in the support of the clergy's functions at the time, but today, the absence of religious activity has given a new vocation to these buildings, which have lead them to be detached from the church's urban composition. Since 1973, the presbytery changed vocations twice, from a provincially owned community health centre to a senior's residence that is today actively engaged with the community. The sale of the presbytery space was necessary to create income,[52] evidence that the church experienced financial instability. A post-2002 addition to the north of the former presbytery extends the residence, partially blocking the eastern view of the church (east elevation Fig.2.41) and creating a private courtyard for residents between the church and the addition. Despite the social nature of the senior's residence, playing a vital role in the community, it does not relate with the abandoned church. The rest of the block is comprised of a six-storey low-rent housing concrete building, where once stood a convent, a college and a boy's school, revealed through historical maps (Figs.2.17-18).

Adjacent to the church, separated by rue Desjardins, is an elementary school in a brick veneered building dating from the 1920s (see south elevation, Fig. 2.40) and a former hospice housed in a brick building, today home to a small community and education centre.

Beyond the church's surroundings, ten spaces of worship, initially built for Roman Catholics are inscribed within a two-kilometre radius around Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus (Fig.2.44). This high number explains the significance of religious activity

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51 Ménard, *Cent ans d'histoire*, p. 118

52 Ibid., p. 26

Fig.2.40. South Elevation with context

Fig.2.41. East Elevation with context

Fig.2.42. West Elevation with context

Montréal
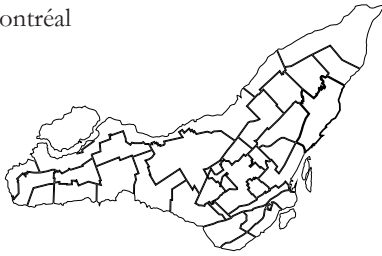
Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve

Hochelaga
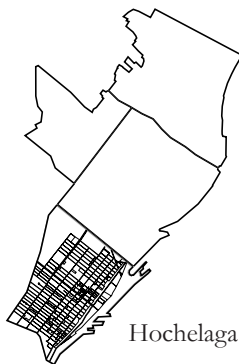
Fig.2.43. Location of the neighbourhood in relation to Montréal

in the neighbourhood, along with the effect of a church (and its supportive buildings) in the urban fabric. In response to decreasing attendances, parishes re-organized themselves, to survive in this context, resulting with spaces of worship that changed vocation. Within the neighbourhood, two Roman Catholic churches have been converted into different uses catering to the needy, and their successes are discussed in context with the complexity of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus in CHANGING THE CHURCH.

The church, given its precarious state and having made headlines in local news since its 2009 closing, is a focal point in the neighbourhood, attracting media attention ever since. Montrealers are regaining interest in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, which, despite its demographics, is slowly becoming a beautiful place to live and raise a family. A good network of public transportation (and accessibility to the downtown core), an abundance of green spaces, and a busy commercial strip with a local character to it are factors ensuring the success of future development in the neighbourhood (Fig.2.45-46-47).

Roman Catholic

Protestant

Other

Currently abandoned

Demolished

Converted to secular use

Fig.2.44. Spaces of Worship:Initially 10 Roman Catholic churches built within this neighbourhood, with two of them converted for secular use.

subway stations

bus routes

bike paths

Fig.2.45. Public Transportation: The subway line goes directly in the downtown core and buses run along the principal routes.

Fig.2.46. Green spaces and parks

Fig.2.47. Commercial strip: Ontario

All together, the buildings around a church once organized the territory by establishing a relationship between each other, the church and the built environment.[53] Altering this context, by demolishing or reusing supportive buildings (social, educational, residential) weakens the presence and importance of the church. Such a decline ultimately challenged Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus to re-imagine itself to survive in this changing environment. As expected, the new functions around the abandoned church created new relationships that replaced old ones. This current situation provides an opportunity to reconsider the church as an architectural element that can still fulfill its original design intent. Moreover, this abandonment should be taken as a chance to add a layer of architecture to the original building, an additional page to be added to the palimpsest of the church. Given the kind of education a church historically provided to a community, and its current surroundings consisting of a senior's residence and elementary school, the potential for the building to still communicate a moral message is ours to determine, in both a new function to the abandoned building, and an engaging design addressing and supporting this new use. However, the way in which a church is seen must be changed, and it is for this reason that understanding the intangible qualities of a space of worhsip, through experience, can inspire a re-imagining of its use, one that can respond to today's changing needs, different visions and diverse community.

Fig.2.48. View from Pie-IX

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53 Tania Martin, "Les cadres du culte: Le noyau paroissial et l'église," in *Quel avenir pour quelles églises?,* dir. Lucie K. Morisset, Luc Noppen and Thomas Coomans (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2005), 352.

*Restaurer un édifice, ce n'est pas l'entretenir,
le réparer ou le refaire, c'est le rétablir dans un
état complet qui peut n'avoir jamais existé à un
moment donné* (To restore an edifice is not
to maintain it, repair or rebuild it,
but to re-establish it in a complete state
that may never have existed at a particular
moment.) .

— Eugène Viollet-le-Duc

As soon as an architectural asset is threatened with demolition, uproar from a community emerges along with an immediate urge to preserve the vulnerable building. This behaviour from preservationists demonstrates the strong, yet sensitive, attachment of people towards their built environment. Such a threat somehow triggers a lost memory wanting to be remembered through architecture. There is a pleasing and comforting aspect about the familiarity of our past, something that we strive to keep in order to identify with our origins. Buildings can embody a sense of community and identity, which is especially true for the case of Québec.

The strategy

The main reason for preservation needs to be driven by passion and the desire to keep a certain attachment to our past: a poetic argument. An old unused building on the edge of becoming a ruin or a relic will always emit a sensitivity that communicates with its surroundings, even in the absence of its function. "Relics trigger recollection, which history affirms and extends backward in time. History in isolation is barren and lifeless; relics mean only what history and memory convey."[54] From an environmental point of view, favouring conservation, from complete demolition and reconstruction, has a major impact on the embodied energy of the building. Since the structure

*Il y a deux choses dans un édifice:
son usage et sa beauté.
Son usage appartient au propriétaire;
sa beauté à tout le monde.
C'est donc dépasser son droit que de le détruire*
(There are two things in a building: its
function and its beauty. Its function
belongs to the owner, its beauty,
to everyone. It is therefore beyond
someone's right to destroy a building.) .

— Victor Hugo

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54   Lowenthal. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. p. 249

is already standing, a good portion of the materials (and the energy required to fabricate and transport these materials) is already present; reducing the need for new constructions.

Preserving a building usually is a chosen decision as long as the endeavour is physically and economically viable. The conservation methodology, however, can be disputed. Questions such as "What do we preserve" and "How do we preserve" set discussions and debates bringing to light the values enumerated earlier. In order to get a better understanding of this methodology and avoid confusions in the field of preservation, a specific vocabulary has been established. Preservation can be considered as an umbrella term, further distinguished by specific interventions, which are graphically explained in Fig.3.1 and show the spectrum of strategies. Typically, conservation architects choose a middle ground between a laissez-faire approach (no intervention at all) and making a replica of the building.

Preservation in Québec[55]

As stipulated in the introduction, Québec looks carefully over the preservation of its heritage, which is evident through Montréal. Heritage assets can be protected under all three levels of government: municipal, provincial and federal. In Québec, the *Ministère de la Culture et des Communications* (*Ministère*) is responsible for applying the law protecting heritage assets in the province: the Cultural Property Act and under the recommendation of a commission who follow a list of criteria (intrinsic and extrinsic values, symbolic values, architectural and historical values, etc.), the *Ministère* can label heritage buildings with certain designations. Buildings with a heritage value can be classified or recognized on the provincial level and cited at the municipal level. In addition to the protection of individual

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55   http://www.mcc.gouv.qc.ca/index.php?id=2158. Updated April 2nd 2012, accessed October 15th 2012

LAISSEZ-FAIRE
to leave the site alone, without any intervention

CONSERVATION / MAINTENANCE
to conserve as much historic building fabric as possible, to perform maintenance work on the building to prevent decay, to "mothball" the building

STABILIZATION / CONSOLIDATION
to arrest the decaying process by providing minimal structural repairs and stabilizing finishes

RESTORATION
to bring back a building to a predetermined time in its history. This intervention can involve major interventions such as removing later additions in order for the building to be faithful to a specific time

REHABILITATION / RENOVATION
to make the building efficient for contemporary use through adapting it to current codes and standards

RECONSTRUCTION
to reassemble a collapsed structure (completely or partially) in situ. This intervention is justified in cases of floods, earthquakes, collapses, bombings and/or other catastrophes

RELOCATION
to move a building to a different location to ensure its preservation. The building can be disassembled and reassembled elsewhere. This intervention is usually a last case resort

REPLICATION/FACSIMILE
to make a copy of a building either on the same site or a different site

INCREASING DEGREE OF INTERVENTION

REALM OF WORK OF MOST ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATIONISTS

Fig.3.1. Degrees of intervention in architectural preservation

buildings, provincial and municipal authorities can give a defined district with a concentration of significant heritage buildings a protective status. Fig.3.2 provides the advantages and obligations of either type of protection statuses, applied to an individual building.

	Provincial		Municipal
	Classification	Recognition	Citation
Advantages to owners			
Legal protection	x	x	x
Gains in plus-value	x	x	x
Qualified for registration under the Canadian Register of Historic Places	x	x	x
Registered under the repertoire of cultural heritage and the registry of cultural assets	x	x	x
Eligible for technical support from the *Ministère*	x	x	
Eligible for technical/financial support from the municipality			x
Eligible for financial aid from the *Ministère* for restoration/archeological/ maintenance interventions	x	x	x
Eligible for financial aid from the municipality			x
Eligible for programs from other provincial ministries, public organizations and the Canadian government	x	x	x
Eligible for property tax exemptions (up to 50%) if not used for commercial purposes	x		
Obligation of owners			
Must keep building in good condition	x	x	x
Must keep the building in Quebec	x	x	x
Must obtain approval from the ministry prior to any kind of intervention	x	x	
Must obtain approval from the municipality prior to any kind of intervention			x

Fig.3.2.   Rights and Responsibilities of owners of heritage properties

As soon as a building receives a protective status, (provincial or municipal level) it is bound under the Cultural Property Act. Initiated by a consensus of people striving to preserve its heritage architecture, the main reasons to have a building under the care of this Act is for visibility and protection to avoid demolition or any kind of destructive alteration. This initiation to protect usually follows a recent threat to the building: a prospective sale to a private owner, a potential demolition, a change of function, or abandonment, such as the case of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus. A municipality can cite a building

(to secure its preservation) without the approval of the owner (although this agreement between both parties is desired). This possibility shows that collective effort can triumph over private ownership, in the event where the latter prefers demolition over conservation for development.[56] Regardless of the ownership, mechanisms to preserve, to some extent, a building are more easily accessible nowadays.

Another level of designation (non-legal) has been created by the *Conseil du Patrimoine Religieux du Québec* (*Conseil*)[57], a private not-for-profit corporation which collaborates with the *Ministère* in affairs regarding religious heritage in Québec. In 2004, the *Conseil* published an online inventory of 2751 spaces of worship in Québec, and from this number, 1554 received a "heritage evaluation" based on three values: historic and symbolic, exterior art and architecture and interior art and architecture. Following an A-B-C grading for each criterion (A being exceptional, B being superior and C being average or weak), the final result consists of a three-letter combination (one attributed to each of the three criteria) classifying the building under one of five ranks, as outlined in Fig.3.3. This ranking has no legal value of protection, it only informs on the heritage value of a space of worship. Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus received an overall grade of C, with the interiors gaining the highest score.

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56 This example happened in the 1970s when a private investor in Montréal was forced to stop further development of the Milton-Parc neighbourhood after a coalition of residents (with the help of the newly-formed group Heritage Montréal) succeeded in protecting the district. Source: Heritage Montréal

57 Council of religious heritage in Québec

Rank	Status	Letter combination
A	Essential	AAA
B	Exceptional	AAB–ABA–BAA–CAA
C	Superior	AAC–ABB-ACA-BAB-BBA-CAB-**CBA**
D	Average	ABC-ACB-BAC-BCA-BBB-BBC-BCB-CAC-CCA-CBB-CBC-CCB
E	Weak	ACC-BCC-CCC

Criteria 1:Historic and Symbolic Value		
	Grade	**Argument**
Age Factor	C	The church, constructed between 1903 and 1906 is relatively new compared to other churches in Quebec.
Phenomena, **event** or significant historical figure	C	The church is built following the will to erect a cathedral for the East of Montreal and is the first ecclesiastical building in Maisonneuve (both arguments are of local importance).

Criteria 2: Exterior		
	Grade	**Argument**
Art and architecture value	B	The church is built by 2 architects, one of them is well known in Quebec. The church is a good realisation in the architect's portfolio. The façade, although well designed, is not a unique style in Montreal.
Integrity	N/A	In 1929, the two originally installed neo-baroque belltowers are replaced by classical styled ones.

Criteria 3: Interior		
	Grade	**Argument**
Art and architecture value	A	The interiors feature high quality painted canvas realized by a well-known Quebec artist. This church is most likely his grandest achievement. The organ is very well integrated in the space and provides visual appeal and remarkable acoustics
Integrity	N/A	In 1958, the lateral altars in the transept are removed and pews and confessionals are installed instead.

Final grade		
Criteria 1	Criteria 2	Criteria 3
C	**B**	**A**
C		
Superior		

Fig.3.3. Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus' classification results

Although heritage protection is accompanied by attractive financial advantages, the status enforces detailed rules restricting the building to remain in its original form. In the case where an adaptive reuse project is envisioned for a building of heritage value, a designation under the Cultural Property Act constrains the building owners to request authorization from the authority giving the designation (which is reasonable since they partly fund any kind of work) and adhere to strict guidelines for its preservation. The integrity and appearance of a protected building are usually elements that cannot be transformed, constraining today's designers to innovate by applying a contemporary touch to a heritage property.

From this perspective, I am questioning the protective label given to certain historic buildings. It seems that a "heritage" tag renders authorities reluctant to allow design changes to older buildings that, if well carried on, can respect the integrity, appearance and meaning of the architecture. Although proper restoration of certain edifices is needed and justified, this strategy can not be applied to all historic buildings.

For this reason, I react to the conservative approach to preservation, which I believe prevents certain historic churches to remain linked with their environments and communities. The nature of the building seems to foster an un-founded necessity to faithfully restore everything. From this point of view, the current condition of a church should be seen as a starting point for contemporary designers to pick up from where the architecture has left, and in no way should there be a fear of removal or demolition if the physical condition (and requirements of a new function) justifies the act. This way of thinking requires a different observation of a church, where we look beyond the stone walls and understand the cultural and experiential value of a space of worship.

In 2006, a feasibility study reported on the recycling opportunities of two churches in the neighbourhood of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, including Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus[58]. Its methodology evaluated fifteen potential new tenants and comparing their financial and spatial needs with the viability of two old churches as a place to hold their activities. The study gives an overview of groups and organizations in the neighbourhood, in need of spaces to pursue their operations, where hopefully an abandoned church could accommodate. The initial and persistent financial problems of the parishes in addition to the limited resources available on behalf of the organizations who expressed interest in the spaces of the church complicated the matter further. The study concluded, unfortunately that as a result of missing funds within the already underprivileged borough, the abundance of affordable rental spaces available within the vicinity of the church and the major work still in need to be accomplished on the building for safe occupancy, Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus is considered a risky investment and therefore unattractive to private tenants.[59]

Fig.3.4.   Le Chic Resto Pop

Fig.3.5.   Le Chic Resto Pop interior

Following the church's closure in 2009, a committee for its safeguard investigated on a potential new vocation for the building, driven by the irrefutable preservation of the much-valued Casavant organs. The committee consisted mainly of spokespeople from the neighbourhood: historians, teachers, clergymen, municipal and provincial counsellors. The fruit of this investigation: a *"Place de l'orgue"* (Organ Square), a project revitalizing the church as a centre to promote the arts of the organ, through education, diffusion, creation and mediation, whereas worship could still be maintained.[60]   This feasible proposition is the most favoured by everybody: the church is

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58 **Convercité.** *Étude de faisabilité pour le recyclage partiel.* 12 décembre 2006
59 **Ibid.**
60 http://sauveznotreeglise.org/

largely untouched only the pews are removed for flexibility in the nave. Although no drawings were realized in this venture, result of an absence of professional designers on the team, the documentation available on this project shows a thorough investigation on the implementation of such a scheme. Unfortunately, the *Ministère* did not consider the project for funding, most likely because of a present lack of financial resources and the growing number of closed churches all in need of a financial assistance.

Despite these discouraging news for Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, churches find their way to be preserved. Two famous Roman Catholic churches in the neighbourhood have been converted to cater to the needy of Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. *Le Chic Resto Pop* is today a community kitchen where the nave is transformed into a dining hall for the preparation and serving of reasonably priced meals for families (Fig. 3.4, 3.5). The second former church, *Cap Saint-Barnabé* follows the idea of a community centre with social housing and a multifunction hall in the nave (Fig. 3.6 & 3.7). Both buildings are considered enterprises for social and economical insertion for the impoverished of the neighbourhood.

Fig.3.6.   Cap Saint Barnabé

Both buildings have been constructed in the 1950s a period that produced more modest spaces of worship, in contrast with the churches built prior to World War II. Their composition of modern material (such as reinforced concrete), simple design and relatively small size makes any adaptive reuse endeavour easier and less costly.[61] The success of both reused churches is difficultly transferable to Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus. The size of the church, its relatively old age, its abundant ornamentation and, the famous Casavant organs contribute to the complexity of a reclaim potential, from the current perspective in church reuse, from which I am addressing.
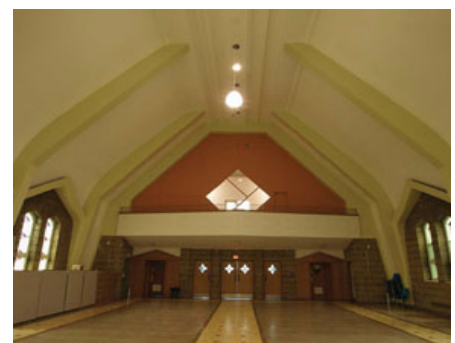
Fig.3.7.   Cap Saint-Barnabé interior

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61 Bernier. "*La conversion des églises à Montréal*". p.36

Fig.3.8.   Casavant Organ: choir (2003)

Fig.3.9.   Casavant Organ: tribune (c.2003)

The case of the Casavant Organs

Ever since the church's closure in 2009, the Casavant organs (Fig. 3.8 & 3.9) were the principal argument for the preservation of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus. The instrument might be seen from two different points of views: as the only remaining reason to keep the building or a major burden preventing the abandoned structure to evolve. The latter view seems more just since the presence (and placement) of the organs, which admittedly are of imposing stature and quality, greatly restrict the potential of the vacant church's architecture to explore other uses for a contemporary public space. In this thesis, the aim is to re-imagine the architecture of the church focusing on its experience as a space, rather than the value of an instrument.

The Casavant organs were installed around 1915, where they adapted to an existing architecture. In the event where the church's design followed the placement of the instrument, its preservation may be justified, but it is not the case here. Although my attitude towards the organs differs greatly from popular opinion, my interest lies primarily on the building, its experience as a public space and its cultural value in a plural environment. Whereas the new proposal for the empty church does not involve any ecclesiastical activity, a musical instrument traditionally associated with religion can be removed and used in another space of worship in need of an organ. This removal brings the church to its elemental language, where the architecture, rather than the instrument, is showcased.

Conservation guidelines and goals

Understanding elements of the existing architecture and embracing the opportunities provided in the future with a new function sets the tone in finding what needs to be remembered (and therefore preserved) about church architecture that can be valued for today's needs. Although a church is, by nature, a very significant typology, elements of the building are of various degrees of importance. The powerful quality of light, the public and private experience of a ritual, and its accessibility to the public are three intangible elements that are fundamental to be preserved in order to reintegrate an abandoned church into its context and give it back its purpose within a community. In the context of this thesis, these three values are preserved and enhanced through the pursuit of three goals:

Maintain a social link
Despite a shift from a strongly religious social and political environment towards a secular and plural one, this change can not justify the abandonment of an imposing space of worship, such as Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus. The Church, as an institution, is slowly losing its influence, but the church as a building still embodies powerful meaning that impacts the community on a social and environmental level. The building once assembled an entire neighbourhood not solely for religious purposes such as Sunday masses, but also for other types of gatherings such as scouts, self-help clubs and other types of (more or less) secular community associations[62]. On these grounds, the building, even with a religious nature, can largely benefit today's environment, in great need to rethink its social links within the members of its own community.

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62 Ménard, *Cent ans d'histoire*, p. 132

Maintain landmark status, visibility and enhance accessibility

Traditionally, churches were the largest and the highest in a neighbourhood, at the image of a desire to glorify. Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus was built in a context of prosperity with the vision for it to become the "Cathedral of the East". Even if the space of worship never officially became one, the imposing size indicates an envisioned stature, and the culmination of an entire community's wealth and once celebrated past. It is perhaps one of the church's most valuable assets. The height of the church secures its visibility from a distance, where its high point can become a platform offering outstanding scenes of the city, inaccessible to the public in the church's initial use. The community can exploit the height of the building to gain a different perspective of the church and the city. This new access to the building extends the traditional notion of the church being a space open and accessible to all. The Church as an institution is known for welcoming men and women of all spheres of life, a principle of inclusion that can be integrated more significantly in a proposed intervention.

Fig.3.10. Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus (2012)

Experiment with new opportunities exploiting light, ritual and architecture
Québec society no longer adheres to religious activities at the same extent as it used to, where a distance is felt between the people in a community and the spaces of worship within the urban landscape. However, such distance could be taken to an advantage: to look at a church in a different way. A church typology is imbued with meaning and aesthetic qualities, and to retain its cultural and social value in a plural context would require reimagining the building. This challenge can yield impressive results, examples of which can be seen through different case studies of church reuse around the world. Fig.1.10 informed on the projected situation of church buildings, with the conclusion that in the future, churches changing from sacred spaces to empty shells, will keep on escalating. Under this circumstance, if demolition was envisioned, it will yield the destruction of a great portion of Montréal's urban fabric.

Light is a free element, available everyday and changes tones at different times of the day and year. It plays a very significant role in a church and influences our moods. A close care in the treatment of light in the reuse of a church and its application to new spaces and functions can therefore give a better understanding of the initial importance of this element, when it is projected on a new surface, or illuminates a powerful action or simply brightens a communal space. It can also contribute to the meaning of a ritual, in the same manner as the transition of spaces.

A church is the scene of a ritual, encouraging gatherings for communal interactions (the space on the parvis or inner narthex) as well as seclusion for private reflexion (individual prayer or collective chanting without speaking with one another). Rituals, although commonly associated with the idea of the sacred, can be found everywhere in our daily lives. Simple moments, such as morning acts before starting our day,

cooking and eating, drinking coffee with company, ablutions before heading to bed, are among many other modest events that can be ritualized. The challenge is to give meaning to a ritual which may seem banal in our every day lives, and exploit the values of church architecture to gain conscience of the significance of the act. In the case of bathing, a sacred space can bring this action back to a meaningful ritual while understanding its potency as a public action and enhancing the social link with the neighbourhood.

The responsiveness of the existing building is crucial for the collaboration of the typology and its new compatible function towards a successful and dynamic public space. It might require the building to think beyond its existing envelope and reach out to new spaces. Because this adaptive reuse endeavour proposes to challenge a conservative mentality, the standard in architectural conservation to retain as much of the existing fabric as possible[63] is loosely applied in the design proposal of this thesis. If the removal of a stone masonry wall renders beneficial for a new space (in contrast to its conservation) the demolition is justified. It is shown that the exterior masonry of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus is in a poor, but stable, state. Locally specified areas on the building envelope require dismantling and rebuilding, a time-consuming and skill-demanding task. Going forward with such costly work needs convincing arguments for justification, which is not always the case from the perspective I am proposing. The return to a specific time period of the life of the church by restorative means does not support the goals of the thesis. Therefore, demolitions, alterations and/or replacements are justified if they make way to a strong design move in response to the initial intentions: light, ritual and public space.

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63   Parks Canada. *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.* Ottawa: Parks Canada, 2003

The new function

The bath is the ultimate celebration of the modern cult of the body.[64]

Given the highly valued significance of a church (especially at the size of a cathedral), the selection of an appropriate program for the abandoned building became an important milestone of this thesis. Since the beginning, I maintained a focus on bringing back public gatherings in this space traditionally used for weekly congregations. The archetypal idea of a community or cultural centre was envisioned, however, in a neighbourhood filled with micro community centres, condensing them into a larger space would merely reshuffle their position. Also, this function has already been successfully implemented in church typologies, and, for the purpose of this thesis, there was a strong interest to explore another route of reuse. Instead, this abandoned church should celebrate a new state of being, in a similar spirit as that in which the church was conceived at the time of its foundation.

The Distinction between Religion and Spirituality

The original nature of a space of worship and the delicate issue of its transformation brings to light discussions on the direction of religion in society. The removal of the sacred function in a church brings the opportunity to imagine what the now vacant space can become. In a secularized context, the idea of *religion* is quite distinct from the notion of *spirituality*. In an interview, professor of religious studies Wade Clark Roof notes that an average person distinguishes fairly well these two concepts:

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64   de Bonneville, *The Book of the Bath*, p. 6

> Well, religion, I feel, is doctrine and tradition, genuflecting, and you have to do things this way. Spirituality is an inner feeling, an allowance of however you perceive it in your world, in your mind, and however if feels is okay… There are not these parameters on it. That you have to believe in this way and only in this way. Spirituality, I think, is what enters you and lifts you up and moves you to be a better person, a more open person. I don't think religion does that. Religion tells you what to do and when to do it, when to kneel, when to stand up, all of that stuff. Lots of rules.[65]

From this perspective, the doctrine aspect of Christianity becomes less meaningful than the spiritual view, placing the person in the centre of his thought. Distinguishing religion and spirituality is a first step in assessing the (many) potential new roles churches can accomplish. Removing masses, weddings, baptisms and other Christian celebrations deemed "religious" does not entitle the building to lose any spiritual meaning: it is the role of the visitor to open up to the newly imagined space. Swiss writer and self-proclaimed atheist Alain de Botton, eloquently expresses in his book *Religion for Atheists* the potential to learn from religions in our everyday lives without following any doctrine.

> In giving up on so much, we have allowed religion to claim as its exclusive dominion areas of experience which should rightly belong to all mankind – and which we should feel unembarrassed about reappropriating for the secular realm.[66]

This inspiring passage shows the possibility to preserve (and re-imagine) the most valuable and important messages thought by religions: living in community, sharing, celebrating, respecting one another, thinking about others, being charitable etc.

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65 Roof, Wade Clark, *Spiritual Marketplace: baby-boomers and the remaking of American religion*, quoted in Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 137.
66 de Botton. "Religion for Atheists" p. 15

The Relationship of Body and Water

In Christianity, as in many religions in the world, water plays a central role in an act of purification. *"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God".*[67] This gesture echoes the event where Jesus was baptized. The various denominations each have their respective traditions in the celebration of baptism, which comes from the Greek *baptizo* meaning "to immerse". The contact with water symbolizes the purification of the body, as a cleansing process to be admitted in the community of the Church.

> And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.[68] (Fig.3.11)

Fig.3.11. Fra Angelico's *Baptism of Jesus*

In early Christian times, newly converts were not allowed inside the "House of God" before they received this sacrament. Baptisms would be performed in large fonts, either in an atrium adjacent to the space of worship, for large-scale baptisms[69] or in a separate building: the baptistery, a famous example of which can be found in Pisa (Fig. 3.12). With the event of infant baptism and the popularity of sprinkling water on the body (rather than full immersion), baptismal fonts got smaller in size and were moved inside the space of worship near the entrance, a welcoming space allowing laymen who are yet to be admitted in the Church. Fonts are commonly circular or octagonal in plan, the former symbolizing continuity and perfection and the latter representing the eighth day following the seven that took to create the world.[70] The baptistery in Pisa showcases an eight-sided central font (Fig.3.13). Today, baptismal fonts

Fig.3.12. Baptistery in Pisa, Italy (2012)

Fig.3.13. Octagonal baptismal font inside the baptistery in Pisa, Italy (2012)

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67   John 3:5
68   Matthew 3:16
69   Prentice, *The Heritage of the Cathedral*, p.72
70   Ibid., p.44

Fig.3.14. Contemporary design for a baptismal font in Salisbury Cathedral, UK

can be crafted with modern materials and designed to be a contemporary feature, with no loss to their symbolism, such as the font in Salisbury Cathedral in the United Kingdom (Fig. 3. 14). After the sacrament, water is disposed in a *piscina*, a basin near the altar of a church to return water used during ablutions or the cleaning of sacred vessels back to the Earth.

The ritual of baptism is actually a paradox: it symbolizes both a death and a rebirth, through the respective actions of the body's immersion in and emersion from the water. This routine is performed three times, in remembrance to the third day after Christ's death, where He resuscitated.[71] The baptismal font is therefore viewed as a tomb, but also a womb,[72] where the water becomes the child's temporary grave, and at the same time, the element from which the infant comes out anew, purged and cleansed from his/her sins, departing from the womb and welcomed into the body of the Church.

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71 Bedard, *The Symbolism of the Baptismal Font*, p.11
72 Ibid., p.5

The Traditions of the Roman *thermae* and
Turkish *hamam*

In pagan Rome, after the exercise of the body at the gym
(*palaestra*), it was cleaned in the baths (*thermae*). They provided
different rooms at different levels of temperature. A traditional
Roman bath is comprised of three principal baths: the *frigidarium*
(cold bath at 12°C), the *tepidarium* (warm bath at 35°C), and the
caldarium (hot bath at 45°C).[73] A plan of the Imperial Baths of
Diocletian (Fig.3.15) gives an example, at a grand scale, of the
layout of this complex. Admission to the baths was granted
to the entire population, regardless of income or social status,
showing the accessibility and importance of bathing for
the public realm. Unfortunately, it is not possible today to
experience an authentic Roman bath as most of the *thermae*
have become architectural relics in the landscape.

A   Apodyterium (changing room)
B   Basilica Thermarum (wet meeting hall)
C   Caldarium (hot dry room)
F   Frigidarium (cold room)
N   Natatio (pool)
S   Sudatorim (hot humid room)
T   Tepidarium (warm room)
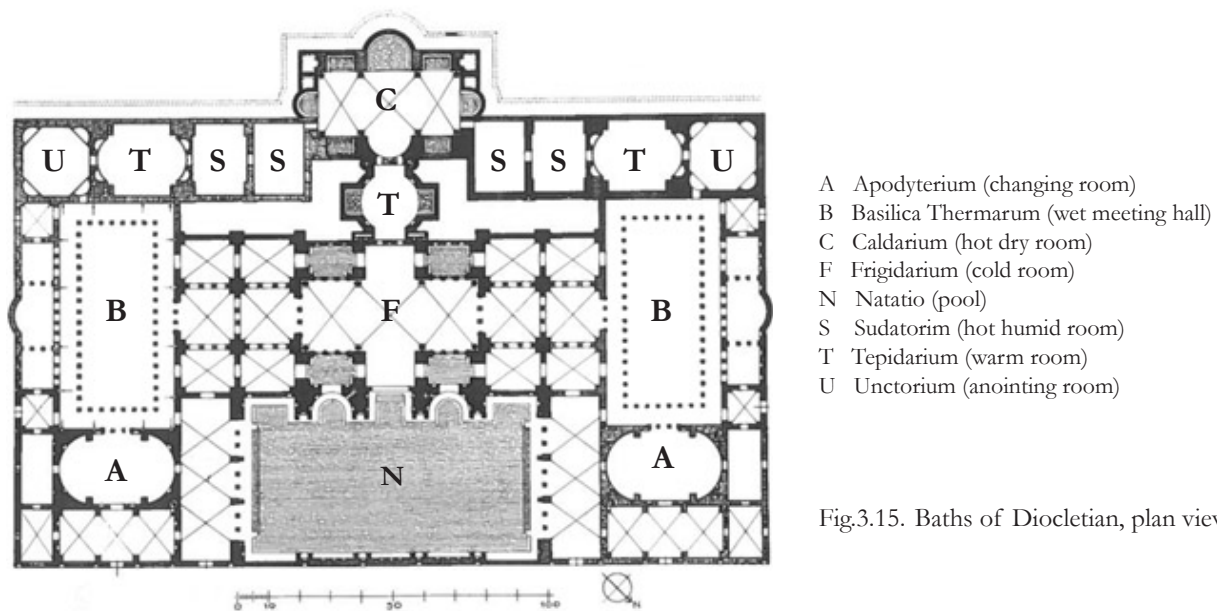U   Unctorium (anointing room)

Fig.3.15. Baths of Diocletian, plan view

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73 The temperatures were taken from the example of Peter Zumthor's
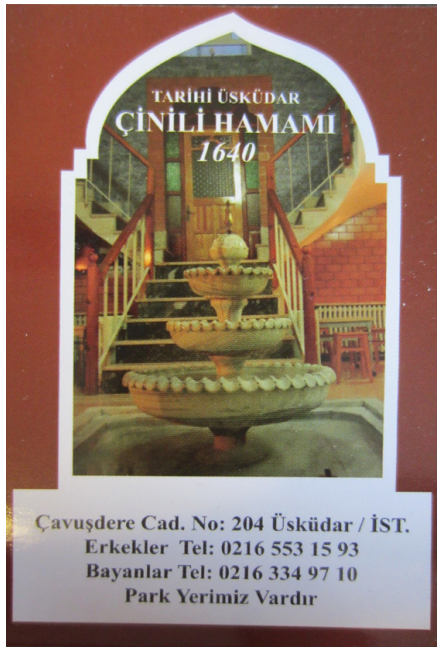Therme Vals in Vals, Switzerland.

Fig.3.16. Contact information of Çinili hamam

In the Turkish tradition, the hamam (from Arabic *hamma* "to heat") is a separate building near the mosque, an extension where ablutions and cleansing would take place. The Turkish baths can also be called steam baths. Men and women are separated with distinct entrances to distinct buildings, but hamams designed for both sexes, were each are admitted at different times of the day to ensure a segregation, are also common. Rare cases exist were men and women are mixed within the bathing spaces (it has been reported that this experience is, unsurprisingly, extremely uncomfortable for women).

From February 16th to 24th 2013, I joined a field trip leaving to Turkey, where I took the opportunity to experience the Turkish bathing tradition and see how can this bathing culture be implemented inside a former church. Out of three visited Turkish baths, I describe my journey at Çinili hamam (Fig. 3.16), a modest and local Turkish bath in the Üsküdar neighbourhood of Istanbul.

I entered a heated and slightly steamy reception room, the *maslak* (Fig.3.17) surrounded with small disrobing cubicles and centred with a fountain feature. Upon entering, I specified to be assisted by a *tellak*, an employee who will later on scrub and wash me. Bathers may chose this optional service at an extra cost. Inside a cubicle (Fig.3.18), I found a thin towel cloth (a *peshtamal*) and plastic slippers (traditionally, they would be wooden clogs), the only two elements I needed for bathing.

After locking my belongings in the cubicle, I entered the part of the hamam where the temperature and humidty rises (the *beit-el-harara*). This part is itself organized in suites. Firstly, fifteen minutes are spent in a sauna (about 80°C) in order to allow the body to sweat and prepare for cleaning.

Despite the men's amiability in the sauna during the waiting time, my inability to communicate in Turkish made it impossible

for me to understand the kind of conversations that are shared in a hamam. I therefore relied solely on the body language, my thoughts and the transition of spaces.

Then, the *tellak* notified me to follow him towards the ablutions zone, a space completely clad with marble. I sat on a plinth with a water basin next to me along with other bathers. The *tellak* verified the water's temperature on himself before splashing it on my body. He then scrubbed my body with a rough glove by holding my arms, and then my legs. The ablutions zone framed a bigger space with a central heated marble slab (called a belly stone) where, topped with a concrete dome naturally light by small circular openings, acts as the focal point of the hamam.

After the body scrub, I got up and laid down on the heated belly stone (Fig.3.19) and received a soap massage (keeping my soaked peshtamal wrapped around the waist). A slap on the back indicated to turn around.

When the soap massage was over, covered in soap bubbles, I walked towards the ablutions zone where I initially received the scrub massage and was rinsed with water again. The *tellak* then replaced my wet peshtamal for a dry one and covered the rest of my body, and my hair, with a thick cotton towel (Fig.3.20).
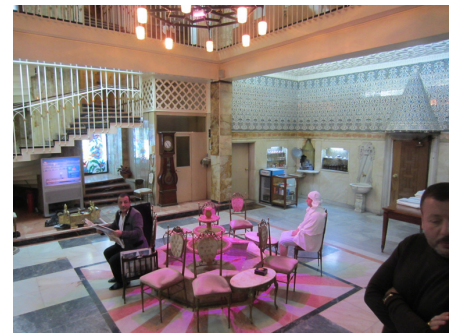

Fig.3.17. Maslak examples in Istanbul, Turkey (top: Çinili hamam, middle: Galatasaray hamam, bottom: Mihrimah hamam
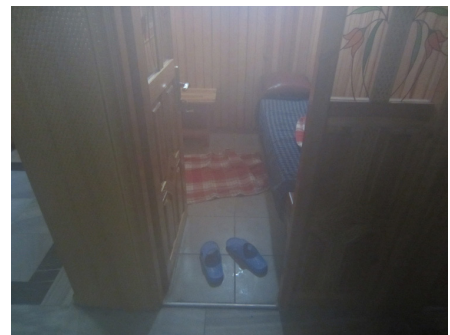

Fig.3.18. Disrobing cubicle

67

Fig.3.19. Belly stone in the men's hamam. On the background, doors lead to the ablutions zone, on the left and right sides.

During the entire time, I placed my trust (and body) into the attendant's hands. Without speaking the local language, I understood the ritual of bathing and slowly figured out the next steps, without a spoken word from the *tellak*. As I left the *beit-el-harara*, I found myself back in the *maslak* where tea and sweets may be purchased while socializing, watching TV, reading the news and waiting to dry off completely before getting dressed, pay and leave the hamam. In its entirety, the whole process takes approximately one hour and was documented through a few photograph (wherever the humidity level permitted) and a sketch of the plan (Fig.3.21).

Fig.3.20. Self-picture after the bathing experience

a   Entrance
b   Office
c   Maslak
d   Changing cubicles
e   Washrooms and Showers
f   Sauna (80°C)
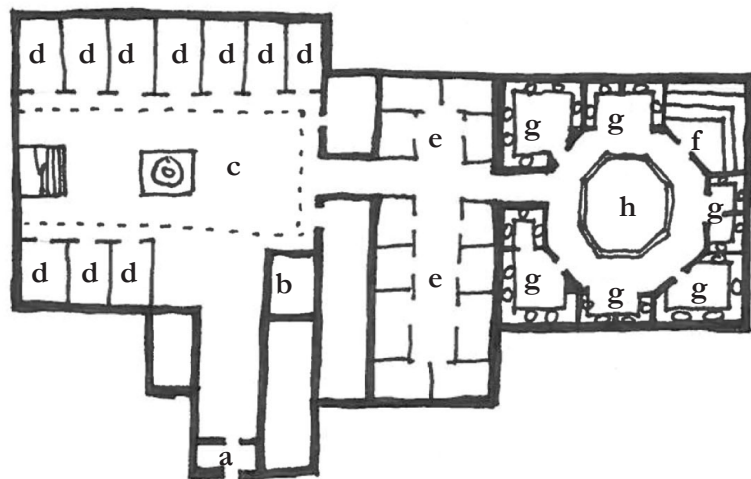g   Ablutions
h   Marble slab

Fig.3.21. Çinili hamam, plan view. Approximate scale 1.200

I contrast this experience in Turkey with one I had in Switzerland. During the M1 term, I embarked on a one-week pilgrimage trip to visit key building projects of architect Peter Zumthor, including his famous Therme Vals. Located in the small village of Vals, the bathing complex celebrates the fine integration of stone, landscape, water and light in a contemporary style, which evoked a strong and spiritual experience of bathing. Men and women of all ages, dressed in their bathing suit, could freely, at their own pace[74], explore a ground level of bathing spaces, focused on a large warm pool. Sweat rooms separated for men and women, borrowed from the Turkish tradition (Fig.3.22), were available, but the conventional ritualistic experience of the Turkish sweat baths was absent. Additionally, changing rooms are commonly shared, contrasting with the individual cubicles offered in a hamam. Despite these contrasting differences, Therme Vals was quite inspirational. The entire complex elevates the bathing act to a spiritual experience, where water is the focus and is emphasized by the material and how light gently enters the space and can trace a path.

1 Changing rooms
2 Showers
3 Indoor bath
4 Outdoor bath
5 Fire bath (42°C)
6 Cold bath (14°C)
7 Sweat chambers

74 I, myself, spent a total of four hours at Therme Vals, more than I actually needed.

Fig.3.22. Therme Vals, plan view. Approximate scale 1.500

In the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries, Oriental traditions, such as the Turkish baths, fascinated the Western imagination and facilities offering steam baths opened their doors in the middle of the XIXth century in London, Paris and New York.[75] The mixing of social classes in Turkish baths is unthinkable and unacceptable for Victorian customs in the same way as the women to be comfortably nude among themselves.[76] These reasons most likely explain the slow integration of Turkish baths in Europe. Nevertheless, despite contrasting differences, and in the same spirit as a Westerner after discovering a hamam, my fascination of foreign customs in the bathing ritual influenced my imagination for a reuse of the abandoned church.

The Similarity between a church and the baths
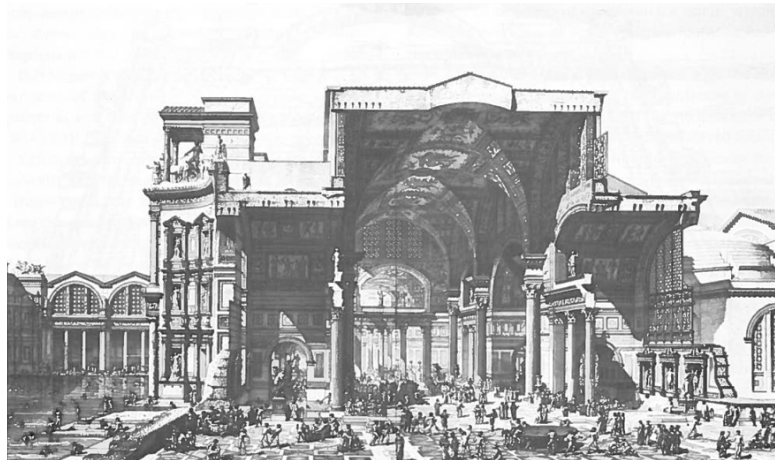
Fig.3.23. Baths of Diocletian, restored perspective of the frigidarium and natatio

This proposal for an adaptive reuse of Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus may seem foreign given the sacred nature of a church and the secular aspect of a bath. Conversions were very frequent (and necessary) throughout history: examples are common in the Eternal City, especially those involving the reuse of pagan buildings into churches. A perfect example is the Baths of

75 de Bonneville, *The Book of the Bath*, p. 50
76 Idem., p.52

Diocletian in Rome, the largest built *thermae* in the Empire (Fig.3.23). In 1561, Michelangelo received the commission to transform the *frigidarium*, the central space in the Baths, into the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli (Saint Mary of the Angels, Fig.3.24). On another interesting note, the symmetrical layout of the Baths of Diocletian feature two interior halls (*basilica*) larger than the bathing rooms (Fig.3.15). Intended for the public realm, the plan layout of a *basilica* is frequently utilized for temples, meeting halls, and other civic uses. With the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity, obsolete pagan buildings with an appropriate and flexible *basilica* plan were converted to churches, a new typology for the growing congregations of Christians.[77] The Baths of Diocletian show that a space for bathing can accommodate and inspire a space for praying, such as a church. The opposite can also be true.

In bathing, a spiritual act and a ritual procession are preserved. The church as a public space for purifying the soul is transformed into one for cleaning the body. This shift, from soul to body (and from the celebration of God through prayer to the celebration of the body through water) addresses aesthetics, hygiene and therapy, important concerns in our time.

Although the change somewhat externalizes the spiritual idea (from internal soul to external body) it refreshes the instruction on a means to live (and act) in community. Generally speaking, a certain behaviour is expected depending on the public place (a shopping mall, an outdoor park, a nightclub, a luxury hotel, an exclusive nightclub, a lawcourt, etc.), but in a public bathing environment, a proper etiquette requires communal bathers to discipline themselves a bit more than any other place. An old Finnish proverb says "In the sauna, behave as if you were in a church",[78] entrusting the Scandinavian tradition with an equally sacred meaning as the Turkish and Roman ones.

Fig.3.24. Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri, Rome, Italy

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77   Krautheimer. "The Constantinian Basilica", p.129
78   de Bonneville, *The Book of the Bath*, p.179

Fig.3.25. Cagaloglu hamam, Istanbul, Turkey

From this perspective, a bathing program becomes a meaningful new use for such a building. It rejuvenates the space, brings together an impoverished neighbourhood and pursues the collective use of water for cleansing, an essential ritual in our everyday lives. The church must now balance between integrating the program's requirements (design for a humid environment, provision of additional spaces etc.) and accommodating two different bathing traditions into a North American culture for a harmonized use of the space.

The design process

The idea of a bathing program did not come until later in the design process. My initial ideas to reclaim the church originated through a different observation of the building.

Building a scale model

I constructed a 1.100 model (Fig.3.26) as a tool to initiate design ideas. It was built in a way that permits elements (walls, roofs, floors, columns, stairs etc.) to be easily removed (Fig.3.27). The building process enabled me to comprehend at a smaller scale the composition of the church and discover qualities of its structure and proportions, only possible through model making.

Fig.3.26. Model (1.100) of the church. Materials used: taskboard and cardboard.

For an adaptive reuse endeavour, working with a model of the existing building and adding to it (or removing from it) clearly shows the contrast between old and new, demolished and reconstructed and informs on the structural consequences of certain interventions on the model. Additionally, whenever a new thought was aroused by sketching, it was tested in modelling, to see how it would affect the existing space and evaluate how far can a design move be implemented without losing touch of the church typology.
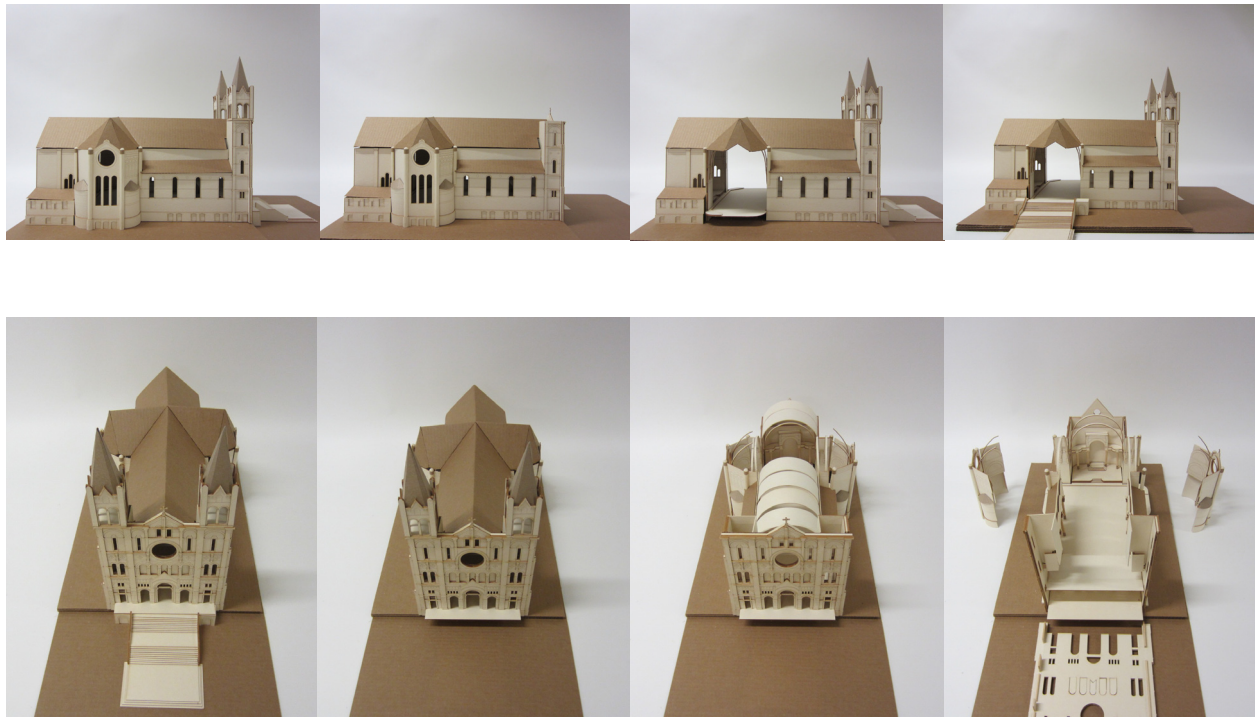
Ever since my observations in Rome, when I saw that churches were, physically speaking, not very flexible to change, I was more interested to craft new spaces within a church, where the model became a very helpful tool, and see how these changes could impact a new public usage of the space, regardless of the function. This thinking, however, constantly questioned the actual meaning behind a design decision, where no answer justified an intervention. Inevitably, I shifted towards a different design route, to find an appropriate use that can revitalize the building, focused on intangible qualities to value. And by adding an element, water, in the equation of such qualities to preserve, the idea of bathing emerged.
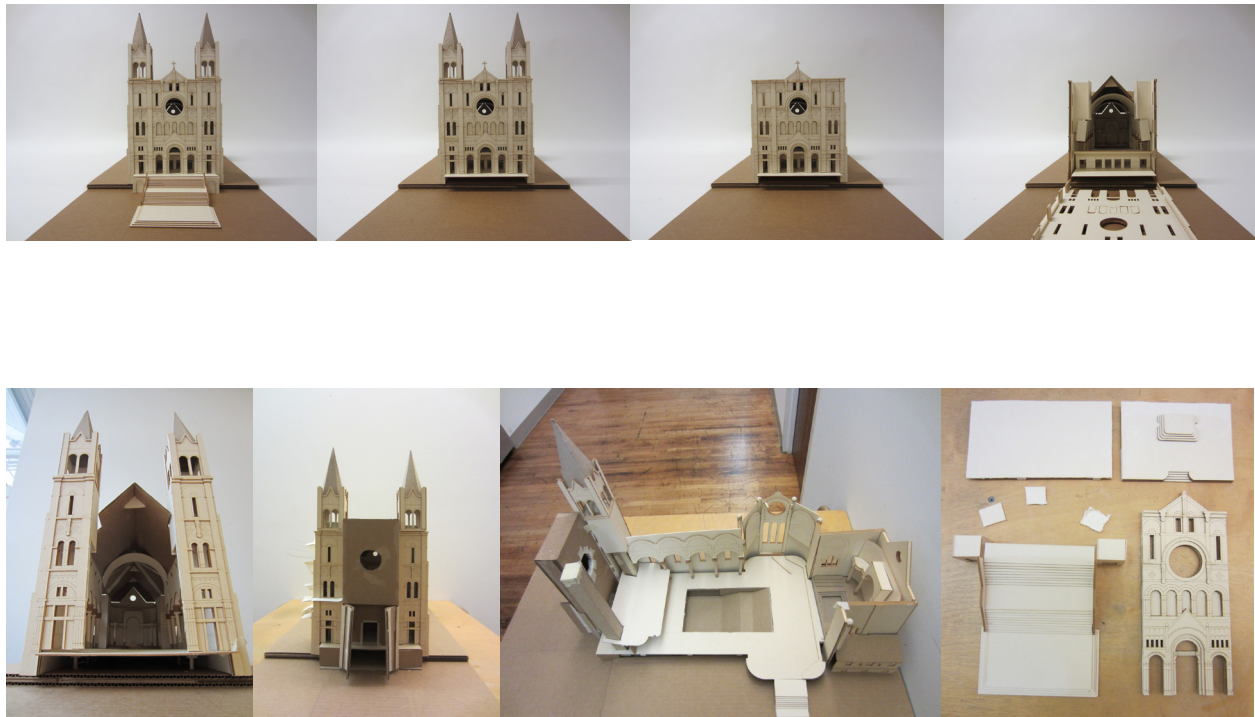

Fig.3.27. Playing with the model: Examples of initial interventions (removals and additions)testing the limits of the building where its typology is preserved.

Fig.3.28. Site plan sketched in the
M1 term in Rome looking at possible
interventions on the church and the
surrounding site. It became, to some
degree, a parti diagram for this proposed
design.

The proposed design

Current site conditions

Fig.3.29. Existing condition: west of the church
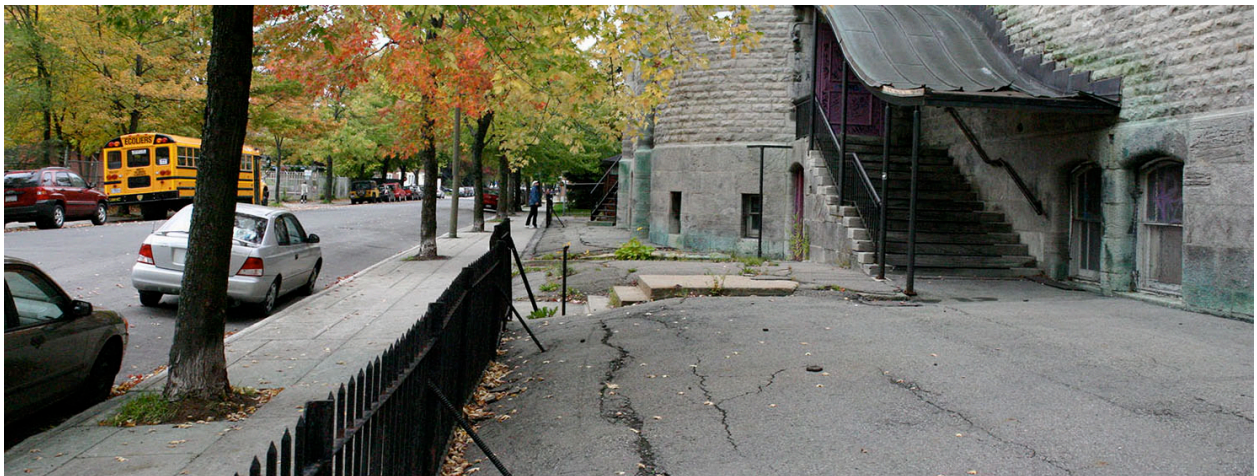
Fig.3.30. Existing condition: west of the church (close-up)

The current layout isolates the church on the block west of avenue Desjardins (Fig.3.29 and 3.30). Over the years, with the demolition of supportive buildings around Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, the main space of worship slowly lost its presence. This abandonment is further made obvious by the conditions of the ground, where cracked asphalt does not incite engagement. The preservation of the church's relationship to the current fabric requires a bold urban move.

existing   proposed

Fig.3.31. Urban intervention: merging two city blocks

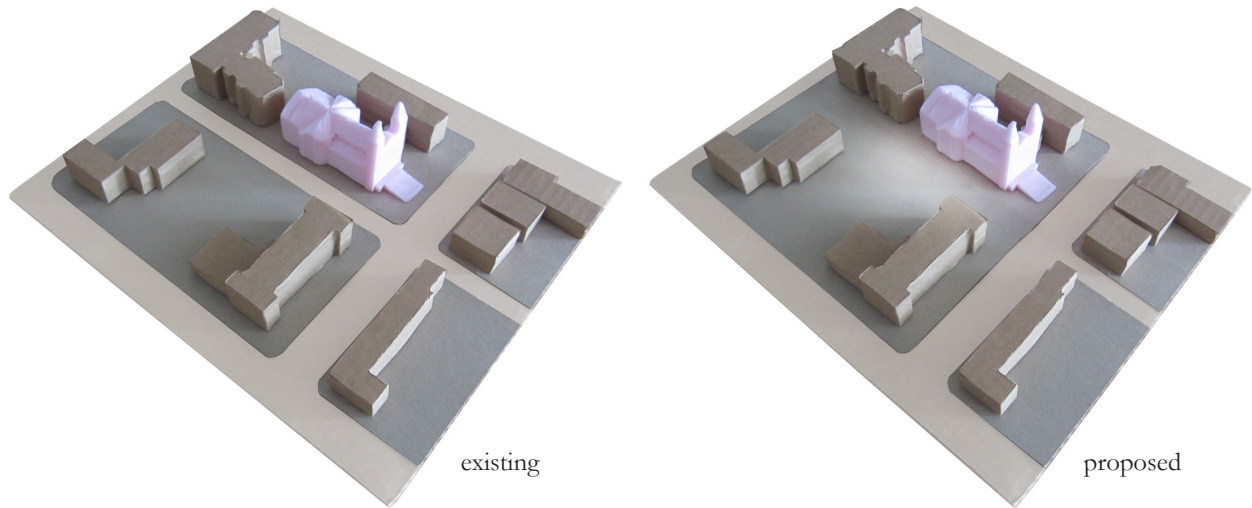Fig.3.32. Feld 72, 15/32 in Vienna

Merging two city blocks into one frees the western wall and allows it to interact with a public space instead of functioning as a backdrop for parallel parking. (Fig. 3.31)

The removed street portion not only makes the church visually more present in a public space; it also naturally creates a public linear piazza, where it is taken away from cars and reclaimed as a communal surface for the entire neighbourhood. In summer, the surface features a sand box along the western perimeter of the church and pétanque fields integrated into a layout encouraging the interaction and participation of people of all ages. The existing trees provide needed shadows in these communal areas, adding to the guaranteed frequent usage of these outdoor spaces. In the wintertime, the linearity of the space and the absence of cars will benefit the elementary school with an additional playing area, for hockey and other winter sports. The slight sloping of this area required a partially stepped surface, creating bleachers facing the western wall of the church, inspired to a degree by Austrian Architect's Feld72 ' intervention in Vienna (Fig.3.32).
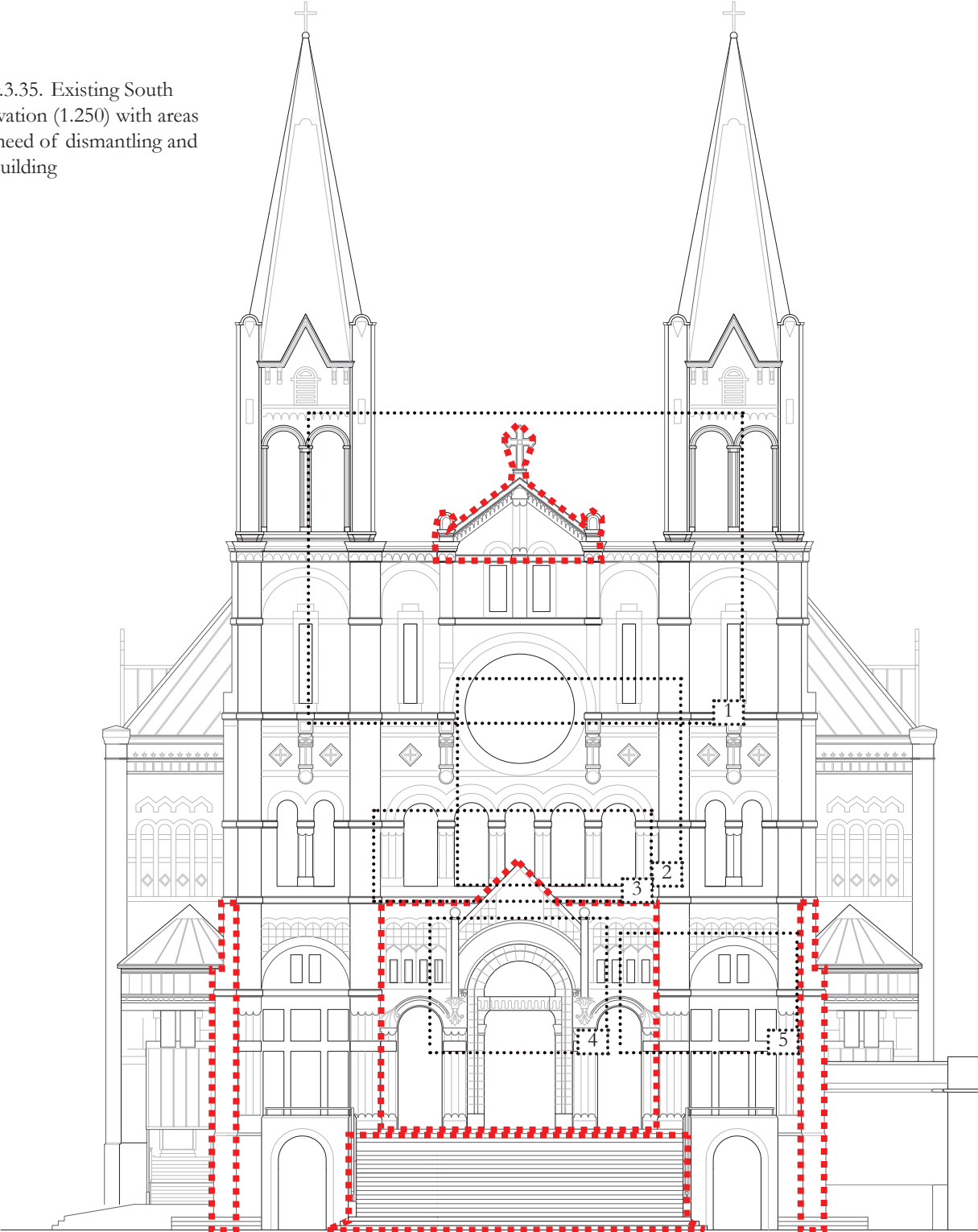
Fig.3.33. Proposed new public space west of the church integrating pedestrian and cycling lanes

Fig.3.34. Current conditions of the façade.

Current building envelope conditions

Fig.3.35. Existing South
elevation (1.250) with areas
in need of dismantling and
rebuilding

At the first encounter, the building showed obvious signs of neglect through graffiti, but also through masonry deterioration. Signs of spalling (where a thin layer of masonry is detaching from the surface) and dirt are noticeable on ornamented areas of the façade (Fig.3.34). It can likely be that the masonry ornamentation is unsuccessful in diverting water away from the face where it accumulates in regions and contributes in further deterioration and infiltration, but a closer observation is needed to confirm this hypothesis.

Fig.3.36. Existing West elevation (1.500) with areas requiring masonry dismantling and rebuilding

In 2009, a structural engineer performed a visual inspection of the church, from a structural point of view, without much investigative work and compiled his findings and recommendations into a report,[79] which briefly describes the church's condition from the knowledge and experience of a professional engineer. In summary, the entire building needs masonry repointing, a common maintenance task and, in addition, local areas need, at first sight, complete dismantling and rebuilding, which are noted by red dotted areas in the elevations in Figs.3.35-36-37.

Fig.3.37. Existing East elevation (1.500) with areas requiring masonry dismantling and rebuilding

79 Goulet, François. *Expertise du point de vue structural (fondations, charpente et maçonnerie) de l'état de L'Église du Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus à Montréal.* Report submitted to the Corporation de Développement de L'Est, November 13th 2009.

Removals from the building (Fig. 3.38)

From these initial observations, a second move of strategic removals was envisioned which coincides with an approach to insert a second volume inside the church. Inside, part of the existing reinforced concrete nave floor is cut out, making the ground level a new and more accessible nave. Additional removals include the ornamented altarpiece with its columns as well as both Casavant organs above the sanctuary and the narthex.

partially cut
reinforced concrete
floor

Casavant organ:
above the sanctuary

Casavant organ:
above the narthex

altarpiece
and dais

balcony

brick veneer
building (today
vacant)

partially cut
copper roof

partial east
transept wall

partial
back wall

façade
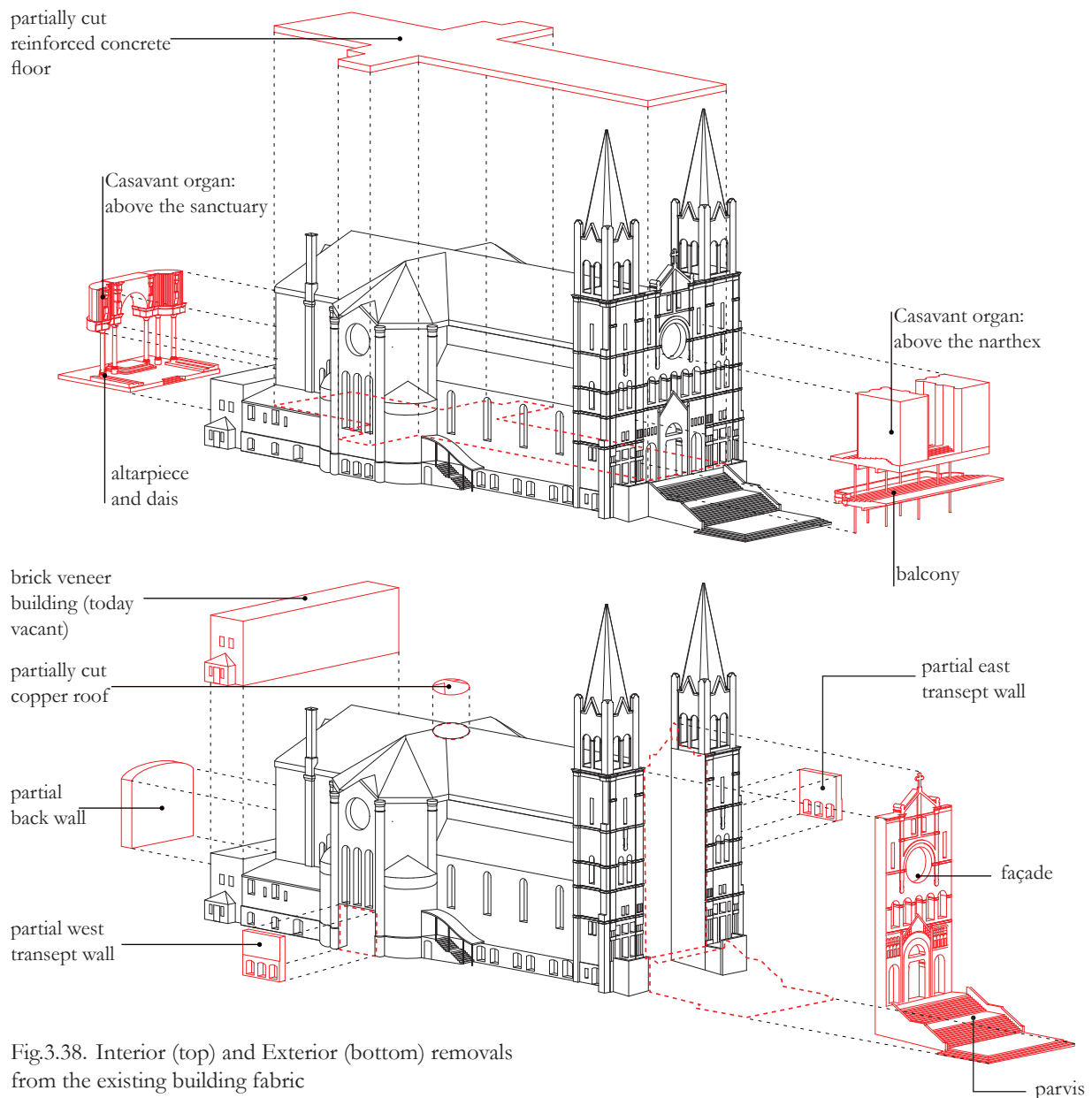
partial west
transept wall

Fig.3.38. Interior (top) and Exterior (bottom) removals
from the existing building fabric

parvis

Insertion of a glazed volume (Fig. 3.39)

A longitudinal volume is literally inserted into the space by "punching" the building starting from the façade all the way to the back wall, bringing in larger amounts of light at both ends. The stones that formed the façade are partly reused to build the upper part of the wall, leaving a round opening for the rose window. This new structure supporting the bathing program introduces a controlled environment inside the main space. It is a vessel that offers a comfortable bathing experience while keeping the building interiors safe from possible humidity deteriorations.
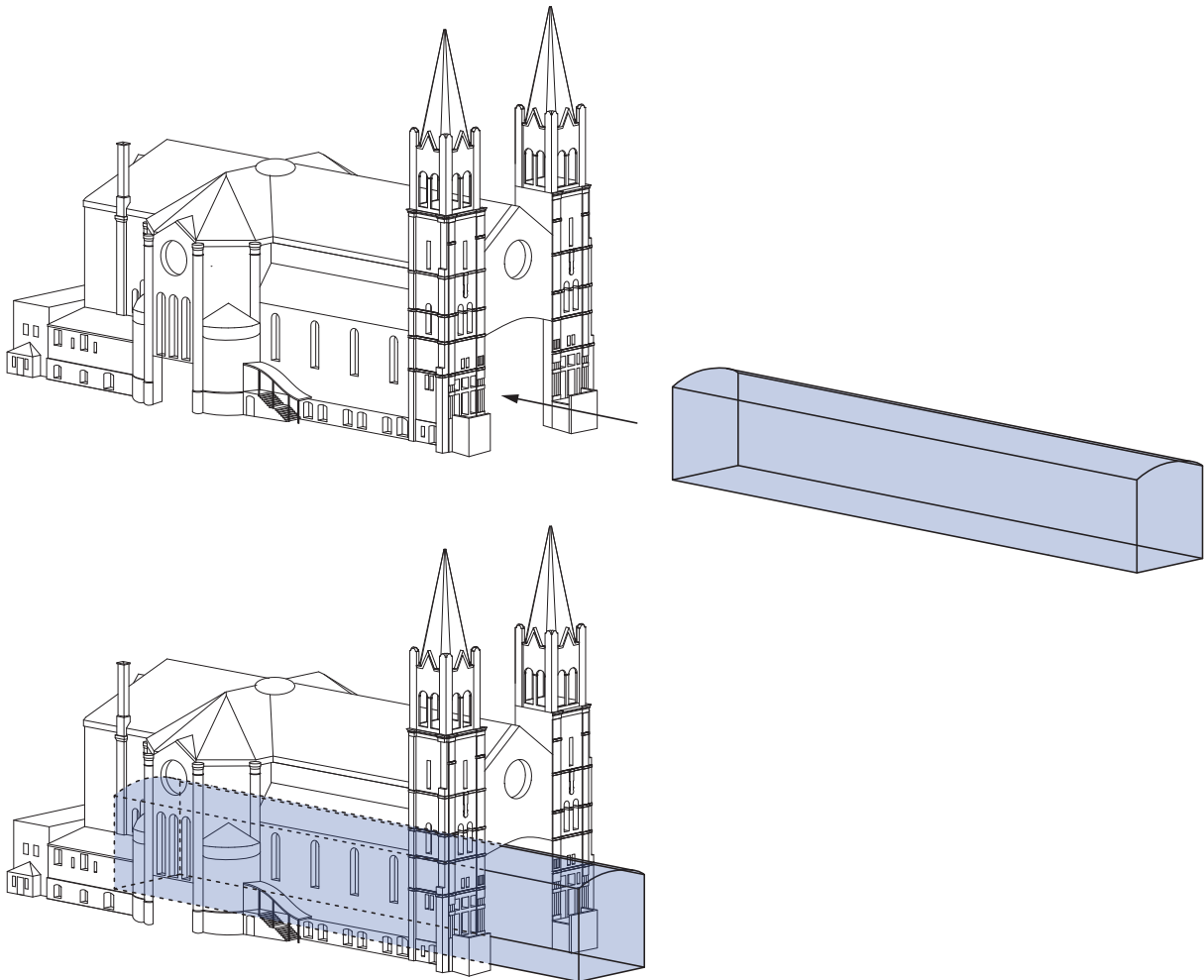

Fig.3.39. Insertion of a glazed volume within the existing structure

Fig.3.40. Interior views and contrast between new addition and existing space

As the presence of this volume greatly contrasts with the existing space, its materiality must be subtle and allow as much transparency as possible, to preserve the feeling of being inside an immense space and appreciate the impressive paintings. The glazing is therefore a double glazed envelope with a pattern lightly abstracting the stained glass windows, interpreting their role in filtering light into the main space.

The current ritual (Fig.3.41)

At Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, I moved, in contemplation, from the profane realm (exterior) towards a spiritual space (interior), made possible by the architecture of the church and its transition spaces. This experience, typical for spaces of worship, needed to be preserved in a similar form (transitioning from one space to another), but with a program that can touch a broader range of individuals, rather than the current one that is specific to a Roman Catholic community.
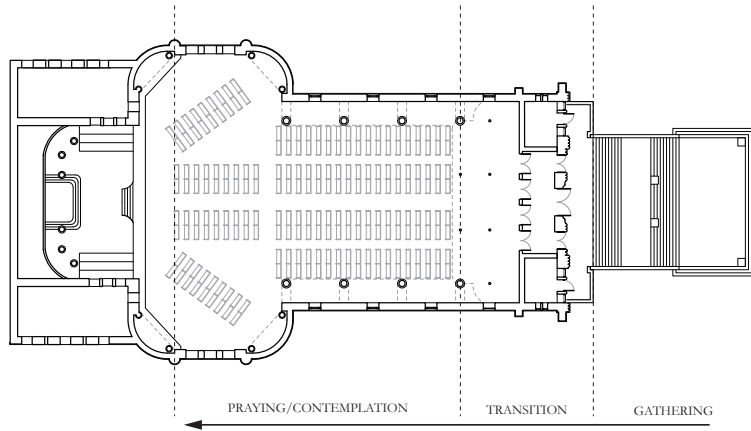
Fig.3.41. The current ritual

The ritual of water (Fig.3.43)

Reintroducing water inside Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus can incite a close engagement with this element in the form of a bathing ritual, reaching everyone in a community. In a bath, preparation upon entering is required. Physically, one has to disrobe to allow a better and more intimate contact with water but most importantly, the act of cleaning our bodies and hands symbolizes a prominent transition from the impurities of the outside to the purity of the inside. This association with profane and sacred is suggested in the context of a bathing experience, where hygiene is imperative before entering the bathing area. Locating washing basins outside of the washrooms publicly showcases hand cleaning, a simple act which is usually performed individually and privately. Water exists also in the form of steam, where it has an equal potential for cleansing. On each side of the main bath, steam baths for men and women allow the body to sweat and release its impurities. Water sprinkling over the body and exfoliation can be performed in these spaces available for those ablutions requiring more privacy. Lying on the concrete beds on the periphery of the wall, a bather can observe a glimpse of the church beyond through a shaft-like opening ended with a glazed surface, where light contributes metaphysically in the cleansing process.
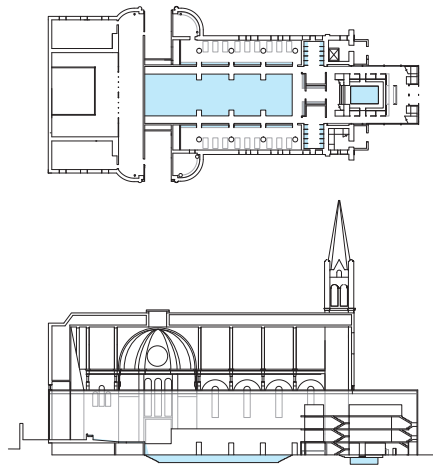
Fig.3.42. Presence of water

As the bather processes towards the baths in the form of a ritual, water performs the same task where it process into a cycle. Originating from a fountain at the sanctuary area, it flows passing next to a contemplative garden along its way (where part of the water can be used for irrigation) and finally falls into the warm bath below. It is then processed for ozonation, filtration, heating and back to the fountain, where the cycle starts anew (Fig. 3.64).

In leaving the main bathing area, the presence of a cold bath near the reception hall gives a final touch to the cleaned body and permits to relax, enjoy, reflect and contemplate on the entire bathing experience.

Order of Ritual

A. Entrance
B. Disrobing (male and female)
C. First cleaning (male and female)
D. Handwashing
E. Warm bath
F. Sweating (male and female)
G. Handwashing
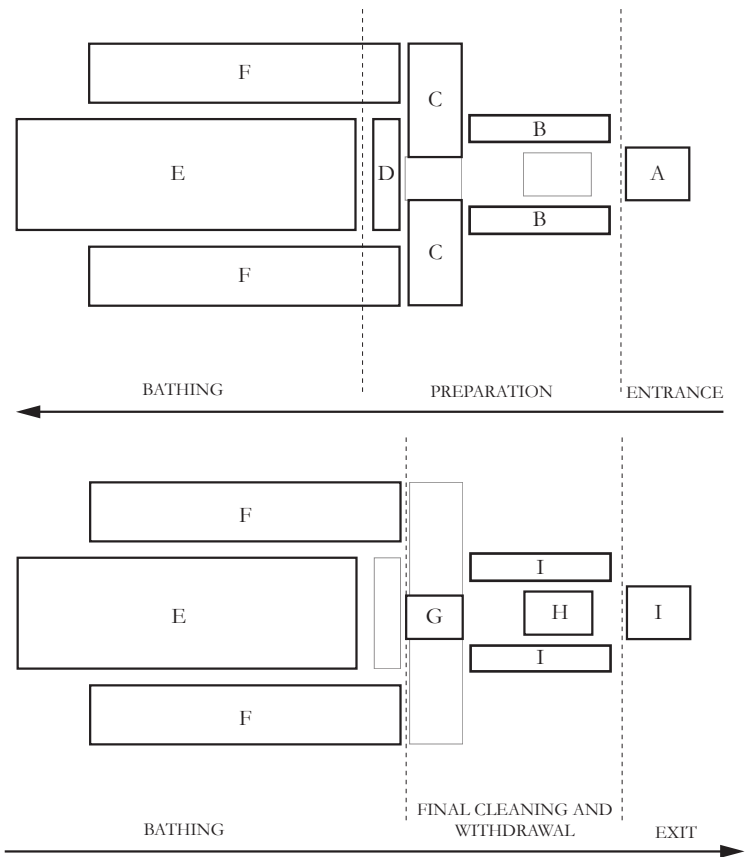H. Cold bath
I. Disrobing (male and female)
I. Exit

Fig.3.43. The ritual of water: entrance and exit

Enhancing the light

Natural light entering a church both enhances the spaces visually and embodies a strong image when it is filtered through stained glass. This inherent quality adds to the experience of bathing where one can feel both physically and, to a sense, spiritually clean. A skylight oculus is present where once stood the painting of God the Father at the ceiling of the cross transept. Instead of reinstating the fallen and damaged painting, the incident is taken as an opportunity to reveal what lies beyond the surface: light. A small ray of natural light from the top intersects with a waterfall below, creating a combination where water and light are showcased as two fundamental elements in
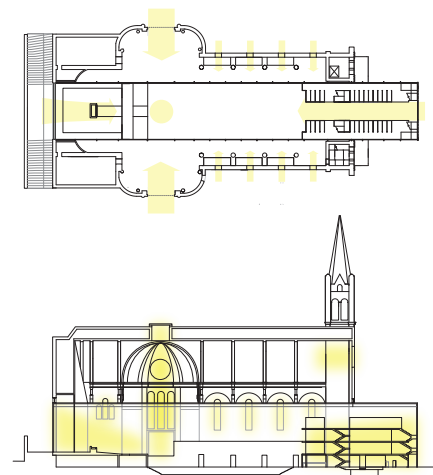

Fig.3.44. Entry points of natural light

5am

7am

8am

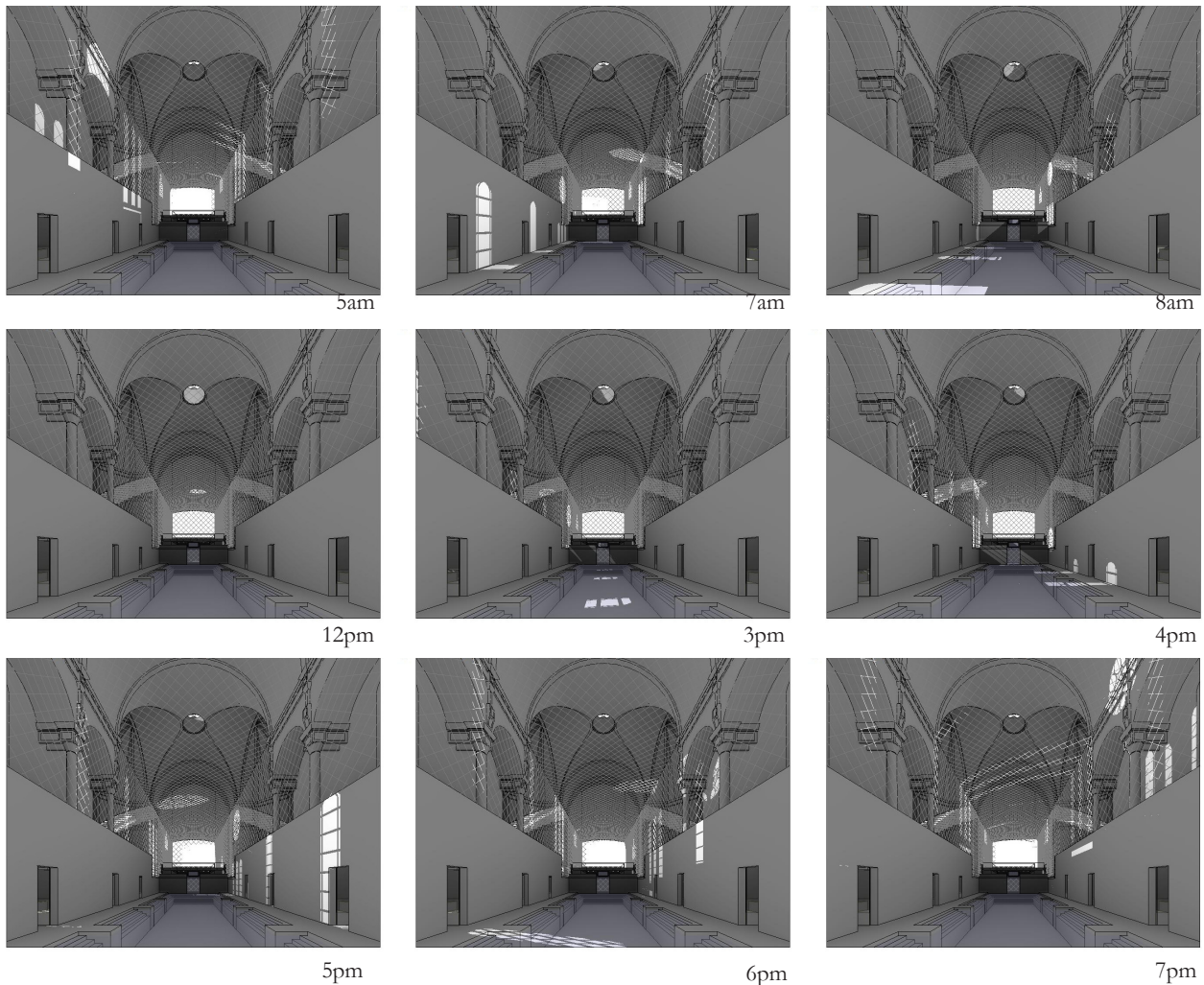12pm

3pm

4pm

5pm

6pm

7pm

Fig.3.45. Summer Sun study in the main space, from sunrise to sunset

the reuse of the church as a bathing space.

The punching of both the façade and back wall to accommodate the glazed volume introduces additional light inside the space accentuating equally the quality of light and the direction of the ritual, where both ends become visual focus points, not by ornamentation (as it was the case in its existing phase), but by light.

Reviving the community

As bathing is the primary action in which the body is purified and cleaned by water and light, it is also a program welcoming a plural community inside a building once catered to a Roman Catholic membership. By opening the space to diversity, it inevitably creates new encounters while performing a collectively shared act. Outside the baths, and within the glazed volume, a bridge connects both sides of the church and is a segment of a walkway around a contemplative garden below. This walk recalls a meditative cloister-like experience in the former apse, where its nature as a sanctuary space is preserved through a relook of its use.

On the western side of the building, a landscape of green spaces, a resting area under the shadows of tree canopies and playing fields (a sandbox and a pétanque court) constitute the new piazza designed as a public outdoor space, an extension of the elementary school's playground. The green wall, along with the smaller gardens around the building can be maintained by members of the neighbourhood, enhancing the traditional role of a community to contribute in the upkeep of its church.

Fig.3.46. Exterior general view

Fig.3.47. Shaded resting area overlooking
the sandbox (foreground) and pétanque
field (background)

Fig.3.48. Warm bath space: the new nave

Fig.3.49. View of the contemplative garden with the fountain as a focus from the walkway
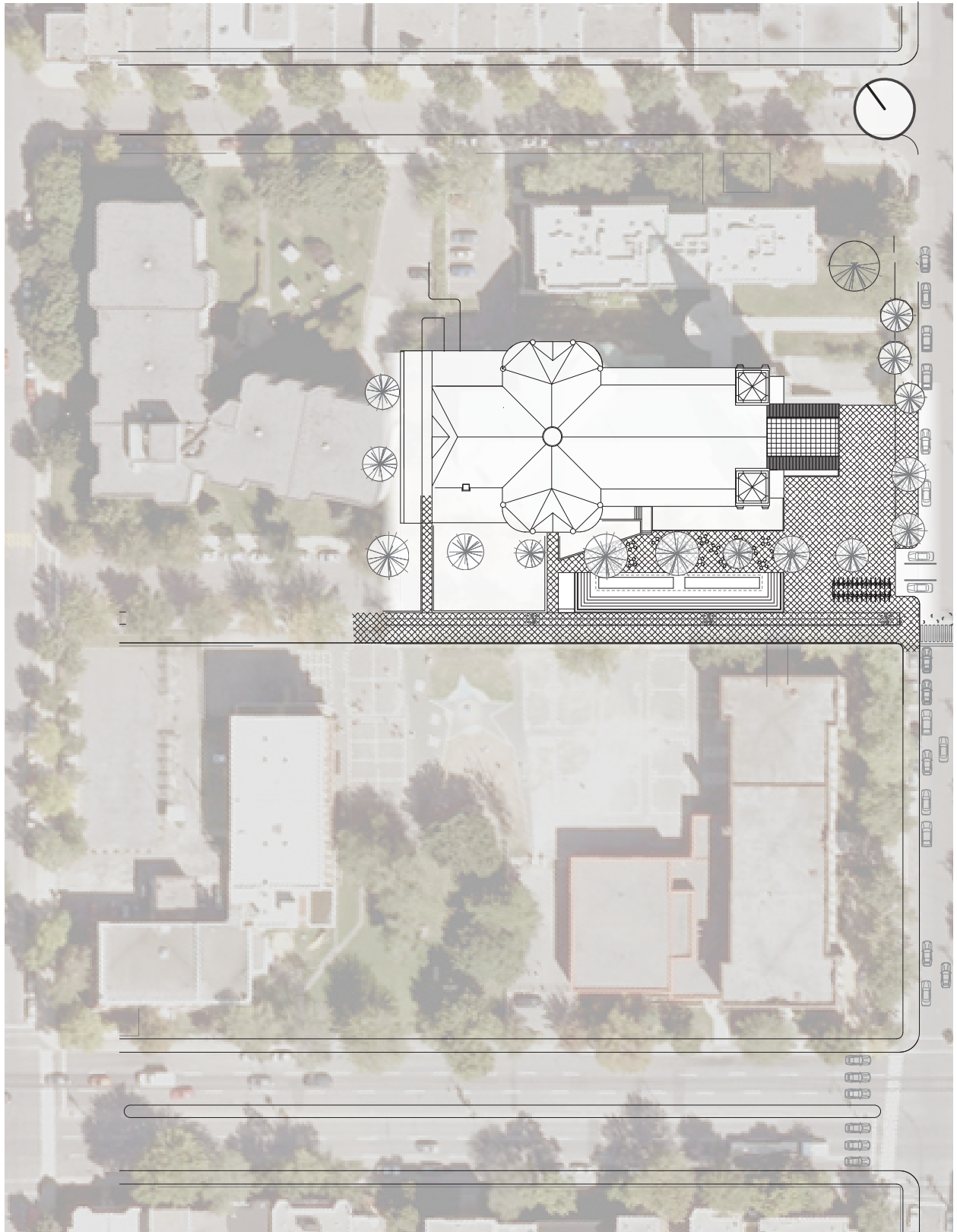
Fig.3.50. Site plan 1.1000

Xx

Q

L

K

A

S

S

P

S

K

C C C

S

R

M

L

F

H

E

G

F

G

D

B

A

A

A

A

A

G

F

G

A

E

I

I

F

F

G

S

N

O

L

A

K

S

Y

X

X

Z

Z

X

X

A. Vestibule
B. Reception
C. Disrobing cubicle
D. Cold bath
E. Showers
F. Water closets
G. Hand washing basin
H. Warm bath
I. Sweat bath
J. Concrete laying bed
K. Sauna room
L. Antechamber
M. Exhibition room
N. Communal office
O. Communal library
P. Kitchen
Q. Loading/Garbage/Recycling
R. Mechanical Room
S. Storage
T. Restaurant counter
U. Water fountain
V. Resting area
W. Contemplative garden
Ww Bridge/Walkway
X. Exterior garden
Xx. Exterior garden (private)
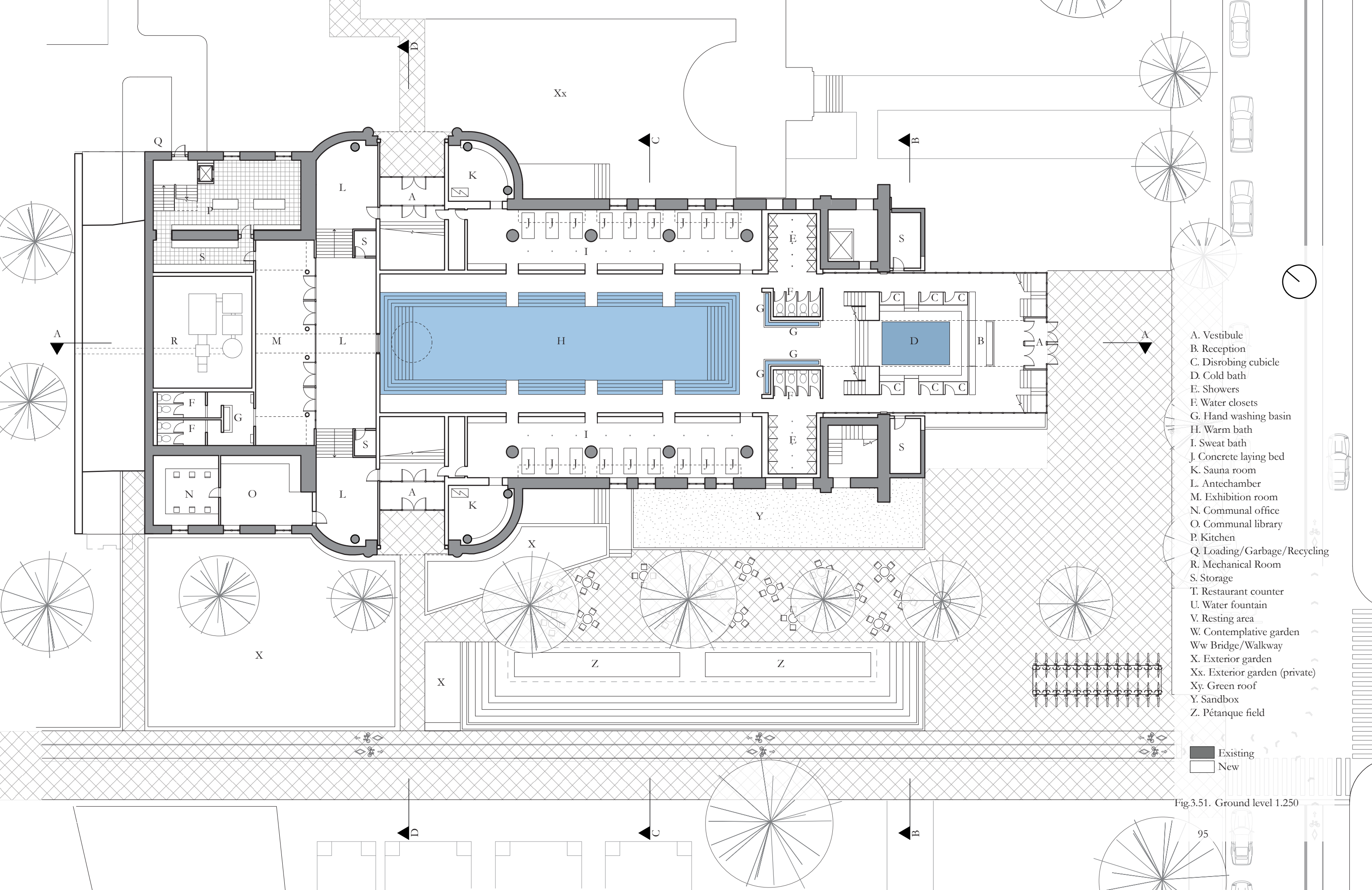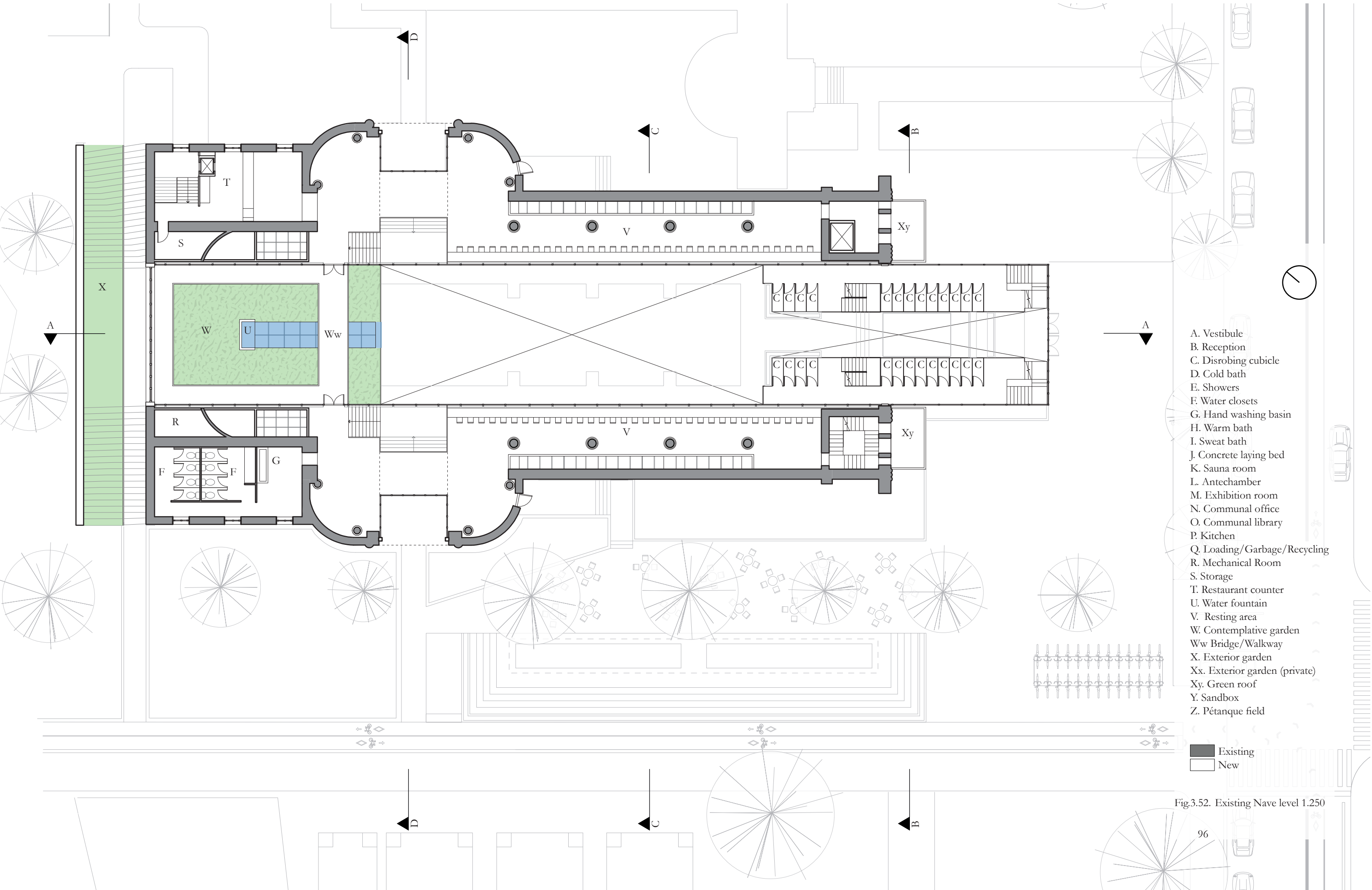Xy. Green roof
Y. Sandbox
Z. Pétanque field

Existing
New

Fig.3.51. Ground level 1.250

A. Vestibule
B. Reception
C. Disrobing cubicle
D. Cold bath
E. Showers
F. Water closets
G. Hand washing basin
H. Warm bath
I. Sweat bath
J. Concrete laying bed
K. Sauna room
L. Antechamber
M. Exhibition room
N. Communal office
O. Communal library
P. Kitchen
Q. Loading/Garbage/Recycling
R. Mechanical Room
S. Storage
T. Restaurant counter
U. Water fountain
V. Resting area
Ww Bridge/Walkway
X. Exterior garden
Xx. Exterior garden (private)
Xy. Green roof
Y. Sandbox
Z. Pétanque field

Existing
New

Fig.3.52. Existing Nave level 1.250

Level 3

Level 2

Level 1

Ground
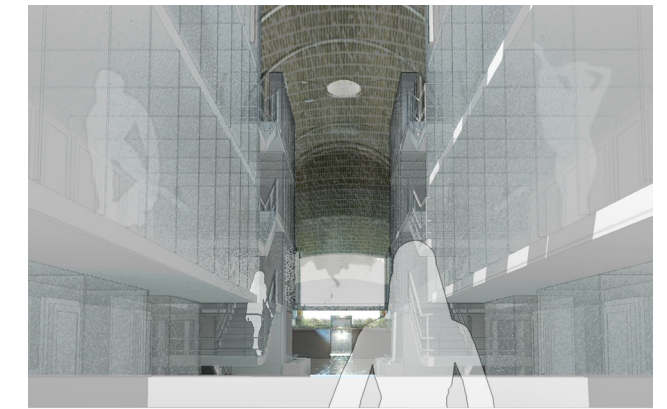
Fig.3.53. Reception desk

Fig.3.54. Cold bath
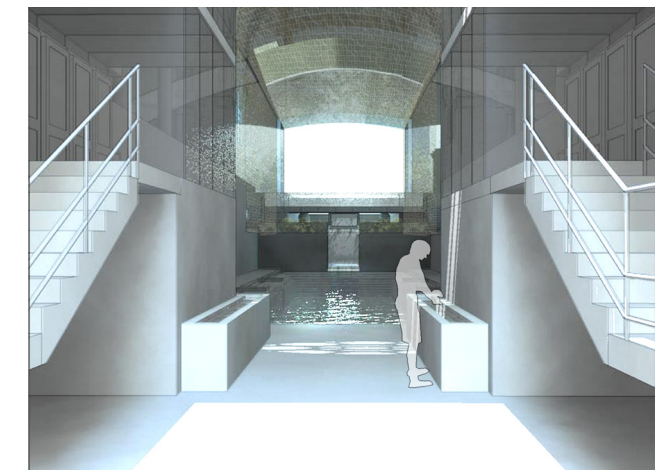
Fig.3.55. Hand cleaning basins

Existing

New
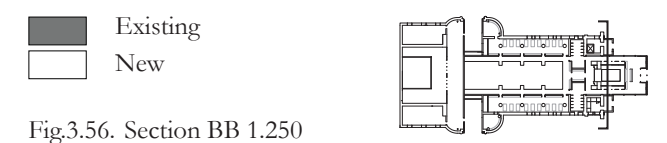
Fig.3.56. Section BB 1.250

Fig.3.57. Sweat baths (men)

fresh airflow →

stale airflow →

insulated glazing

hot/cold water supply

air supply (resting space)
air exhaust (resting space)
air exhaust (bath space)

shower head

concrete laying bed

radiant heating

air supply (bath space)

water drainage/return

dehumidification
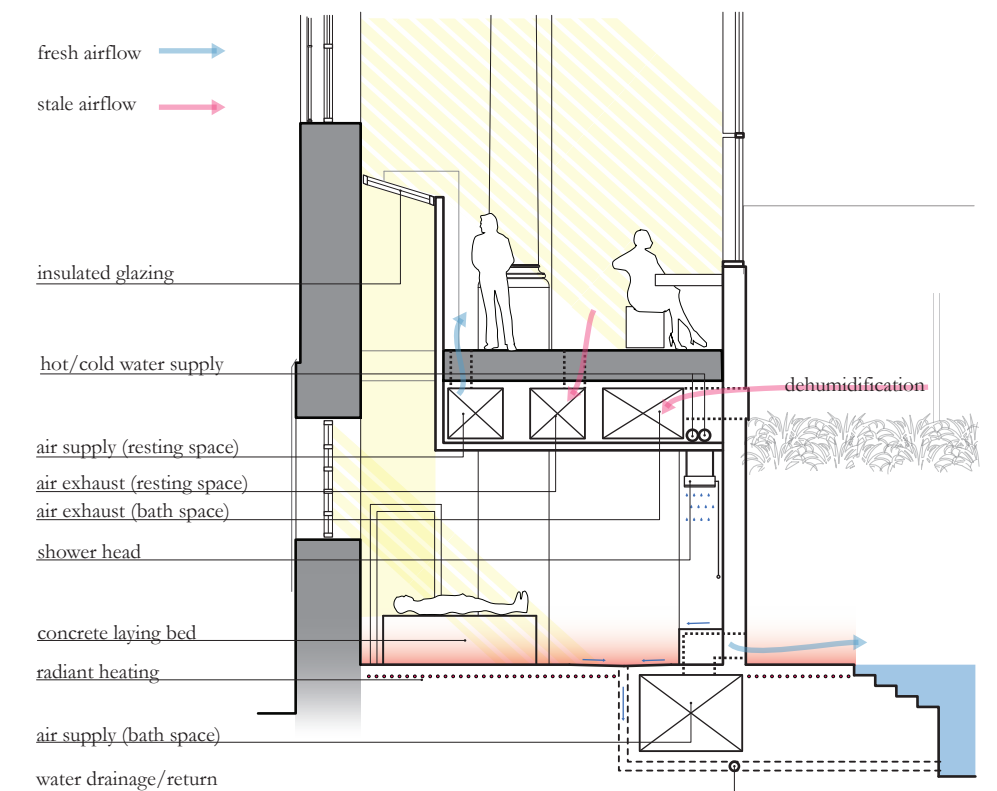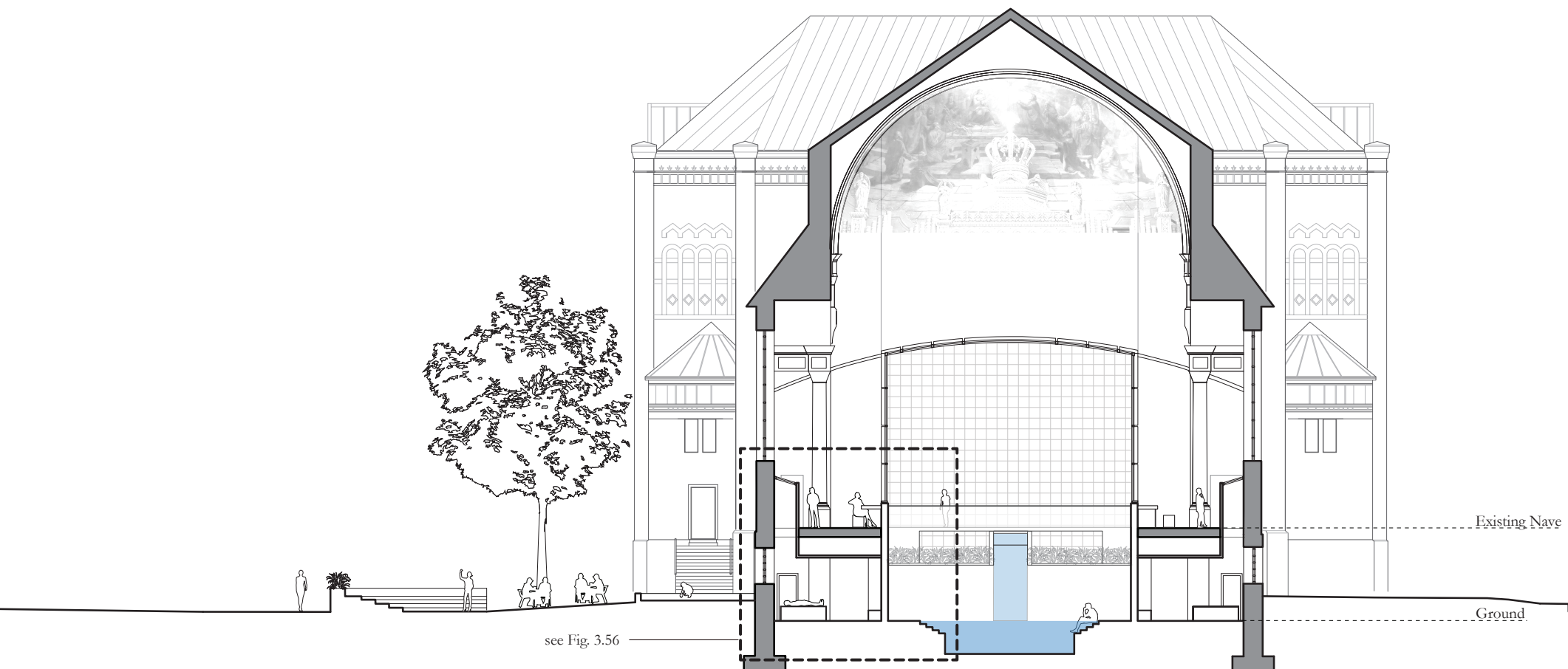
Fig.3.58. Diagram (Scale 1.100) of air and heat flow in bath and resting spaces

Existing Nave

Ground

see Fig. 3.56

Existing
New

Fig.3.59. Section CC 1.250

existing
stained glass
window

±790

±426

existing
limestone
column
beyond
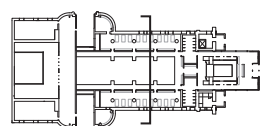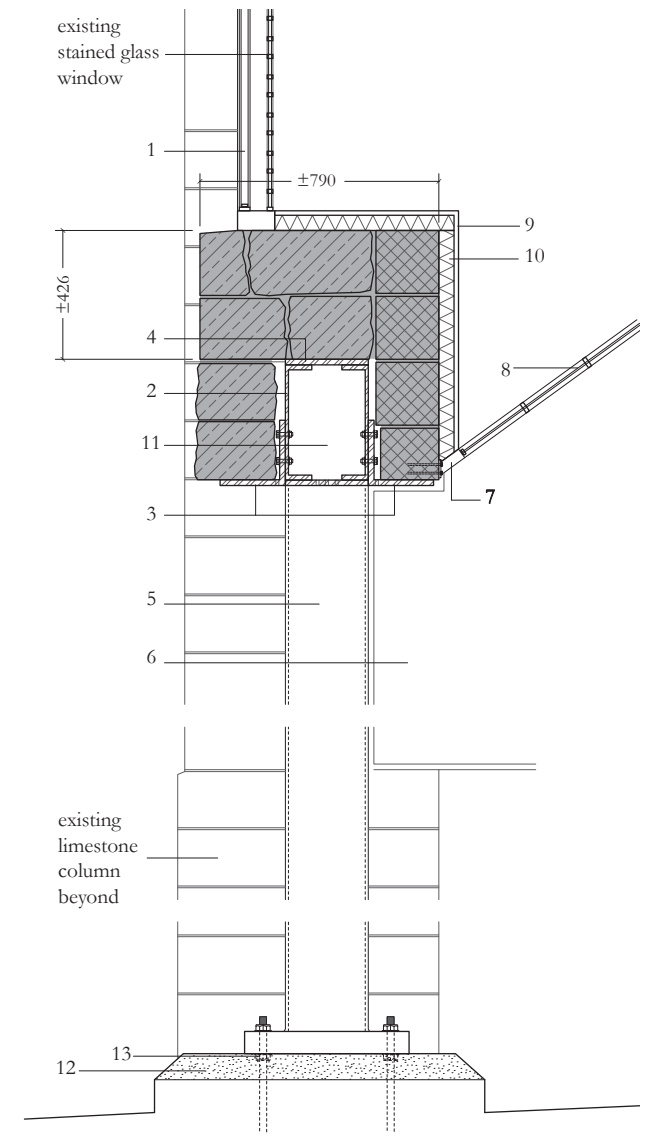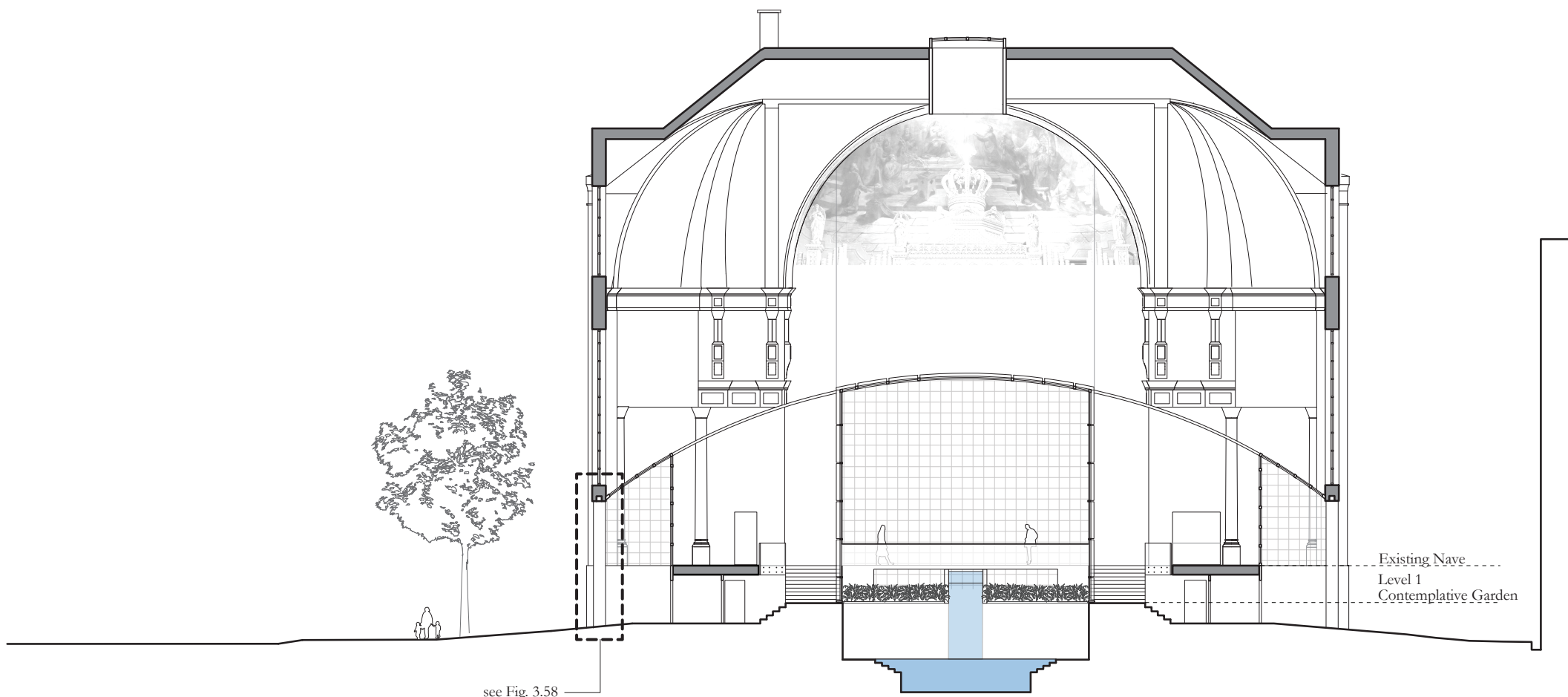
Fig.3.60. 1.25 Detail at transfer beam supporting transept
masonry wall

▨	Grey limestone
▨	Concrete Masonry Unit
■	Existing
□	New

1. protective insulated window
2. C15x33.9 steel channels
3. L8x8x.75 steel angles
4. 18mm steel plate
5. HSS steel column
6. double glazed wall beyond
7. mullion bolted to
   existing CMU block
8. double glazing envelope
9. 15mm gypsum board
10. 50 mm XPS insulation
11. EPS insulation fill
12. non-shrinking grout
13. levelling nuts

Existing Nave
Level 1
Contemplative Garden

see Fig. 3.58

Fig.3.61. Section DD 1.250

99

Fig.3.62. South Elevation 1.250

Fig.3.63. West Elevation 1.250

Legend

A. Vestibule
B. Reception
C. Disrobing cubicle
D. Cold bath
G. Hand washing basin
H. Warm bath
I. Sweat bath
L. Antechamber
M. Exhibition room
R. Mechanical Room
U. Water fountain
W. Contemplative garden
Ww. Bridge/Walkway

Water treatment

In order to fullfill the purpose of the baths, using water primarily as a cleansing element, a treatment using ozone (rather than the conventional use of chlorine) is prefered. It is a very efficient disinfectant, without the formation of chlorine or bromine containing by-products,[1] which release a strong odour in the air and can cause eye irritations. Ozonation leaves the water tasteless and clear. The use of ozone will also decrease the fresh water replacement rate, which in turn decrease the heating cost. In addition to being an effective disinfection agent, ozone is also a good coagulation agent, which will increase the performance of the filtration system.[2] Both the ozonation process and the garden partly irrigated by the flow of clean treated water contribute to a much better bathing environment and indoor air quality.
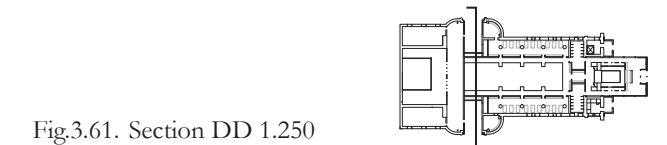
Water filtration is essential to remove hard particles brought inadvertently by the users in the bath. A regenerative media filter forces the water into a thin layer of a powdery media (perlite), capturing extremely small particles (as small as 1 micron) and other unwanted suspended elements.[3] The combination of an effective disinfecting method (ozonation) and a good quality filtration system (regenerative media filter) increases performance and can create significant savings in the long run.

1. "Use of Ozone in Swimming Pools". www.lenntech.com
2. Ibid.
3. McElya, Kevin. "Regenerative Media Filters - A Great Filter Technology to Consider". *Aquatic News & Review*, September 15, 2011. www.aquaticnews.com

viewing platform

green wall
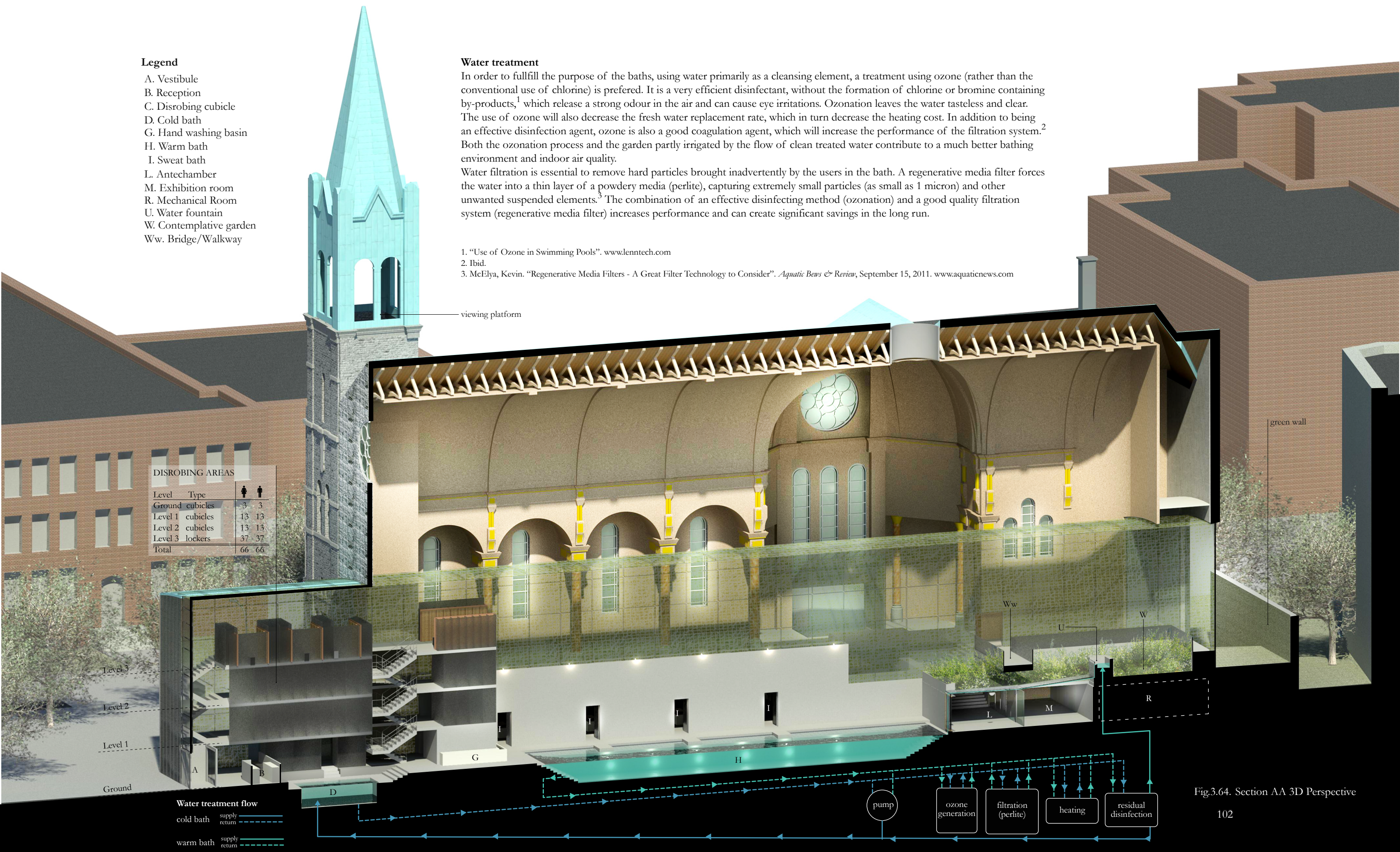
DISROBING AREAS

Level	Type	♂	♀
Ground	cubicles	3	3
Level 1	cubicles	13	13
Level 2	cubicles	13	13
Level 3	lockers	37	37
Total		66	66

Level 3
Level 2
Level 1
Ground

Ww
U
W

A
B
D
G
H
I
L
M
R

Water treatment flow

cold bath   supply ——
            return - - -

warm bath   supply ——
            return - - -

pump   ozone generation   filtration (perlite)   heating   residual disinfection
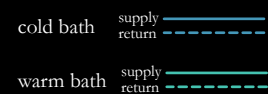
Fig.3.64. Section AA 3D Perspective

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Balancing preservation, demolition, and new construction

Design decisions in this thesis were motivated by three principal goals: to preserve and enhance the <u>quality of light</u>, to bring back the <u>experience of a ritual</u> through a bathing program and to reinstate the <u>public space</u> of a church. These intangible elements are fundamental heritage values in a church, which merit preservation. The church building envelope and interior architecture itself is also worth to be conserved as long as it supports and enhances the attainment of these goals.

From two previous site visits, and lacking the complete knowledge and eye of a building engineer it was difficult to ascertain the actual condition of the architecture, from a structural and building science point of view. Most assumptions on the physical state of the church were made from my site visits and my comprehension of the structural engineer's report. The principal recommendation: a more in-depth inspection (wall and foundation openings, stone wall sound testings and material analysis) in order to fully be aware of the building's state, difficult to verify from the surface. The engineer additionally suggests determining the future use of the building prior to making any changes, as opposed to selecting a function based on the current structural condition of the floor slab (which are dependent on many unknown variables).[80] This advice supports the idea of the responsiveness of the building to its new function. Nevertheless, these basic observations give an idea of the condition of the structure and inform on how it may worsen over time. Wherever the stone masonry was in bad condition and required dismantling, cleaning and rebuilding, local demolition is justified for mainly economic reasons. However, both pragmatics and concepts were coordinated within the interventions proposed, with the latter being the principal driving force.

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80 Ibid.

The *parvis* is completely removed to provide better accessibility to the building. However, its traditional function as a meeting space is conserved: instead of an elevated gathering area, encounters occur at the same level as the sidewalk and expand over the western area of the existing building. In its current state, the reinforced concrete *parvis* requires rebuilding, due to heavy corrosion underneath the stair structure. Avoiding its reinstatement would result in cost savings, and the material can be recycled within the composition of the new paving.

The stone ornamented façade presented spalling, cracking, stains, and other signs of neglect and deterioration. A large portion of the façade necessitated complete dismantling and rebuilding. However, the change of function and the new "making" of the church would require another façade, in line with the etymology of the word, which explains the opportunity for its redesign. Moreover changes in church façade design were common in the Baroque period and this practice was even applied at Très Saint-Nom-de-Jésus: historical evidence reveals that the current entrance dates from 1929, replacing originally four identical Romanesque style doors (Fig. 2.8).

The western and eastern transept walls from the foundation to the sill of the lower windows are removed to provide a prominent welcoming entrance towards the building.

The existing nave level is partially cut away to accommodate the bath and enhance the viewing experience of the church from the inside. Perhaps the most controversial design decision is the removal of the Casavant organs, but, as explained earlier, this move was necessary to allow the church to be flexible, open to other possible uses and responsive to a new function.

Changing the church requires a method on the means of transforming the building. The current preservation context in Québec informs on how a church is seen and what is looked for in its conservation, which appear to be quite restrictive when considering a prospective reuse. Valuing intangible elements of a church experience (rather than the typical surface) unlocks

a wide range of possibilities for a new function. The idea of a bathing program originated with the symbolic value of water and its potential to be used in a collective way, leading to a design focusing on light and ritual to enhance and revitalize the church as a public space. This proposal anticipates to bring a fresh idea to the table about the future of churches in order to suggest an open mindset in the quest to re-engage with abandoned spaces of worship.

Church buildings around the world are closing down. The Roman Catholic Church's constant failure to address present issues of civil rights (such as same-sex marriages, ordination of woman, abortion etc.) is leading to an unpopular institution out of touch with today's needs and aspirations. Québec's traditional ties with the Roman Catholic Church are currently weak, but still physically present in the landscape through religious toponyms and the abundance of church buildings.

This legacy, although recalling gloomy episodes in the history of Québec, is nonetheless beautifully expressed in architecture. However, the reluctance of today's men and women to relate with an archaic and fragile establishment predicts a persistence in the matter of church abandonment, which is an opportunity to redefine a church's cultural value in an increasingly multicultural environment.

A journey to a church is very personal as each person seizes a different experience in such an evocative space. However, from a non-believer's perspective (or even from someone from a faith other than Christianity), this kind of typology reveals more than just impressive interiors: the quality of light and the organization of each space leading to a ritual in their usage are intangible elements of great value in spaces of worship. A secular environment can very much relate with these qualities, which are the basis for a preservation strategy to reclaim the abandoned church as a significant public space for the community.

Water's attribute to clean and purify inspired a program where it celebrates a ritual of bathing, an act that can be performed both collectively and individually. A bath inside a former sacred space brings the act of cleaning the body to a higher level, where through the celebration of water, light and ritual, all barriers are broken and a culture of public bathing can be brought back to a community.

For the baths to operate in such a space, it demands bold moves, partial demolition and new construction: design decisions which require the existing building to be responsive to its new function (and not the other way around) to allow this kind of typology to maintain its potential as an accessible public space for all.

The Roman Catholic Church remains firm and inflexible to the changing visions of a liberal state. Likewise, Québec's approach in the preservation of its architectural heritage (and particularly buildings with a religious nature) has remained relatively the same, focusing primarily on the tangible quality of architecture by conserving as much of the building envelope as possible. However, when given to private interest groups, preservation is applied with a different approach, where spaces of worship are seen as big empty shells where they are often turned into private residences. Such fragmentation of the interior space completely erases the public quality of this typology. The conversion of a public building conceived with a community's hard labour and investments into private use is a tremendous loss for future generations.

If the Church is to enter the XXIst century with a tolerant attitude to reach to a multicultural and liberal context, why can't this same mindset be applied in the way buildings of worship adapt to their new environments? Legal protections may seem to narrow architecture to its physical attributes (sometimes forgetting to consider its intangible ones) restricting reclaim

possibilities, so surely the debate needs to address this issue. Additionally, the lack of funding from religious authorities slows down any maintenance work on houses of worship. Investigating alternate forms of ownership to generate financial resources from public and private sectors sharing common goals of collective redevelopment can potentially lead to viable and sustainable solutions. A test model is currently implemented in Montréal for a church, Sainte-Brigide de Kildare, to be managed by a cooperative of various small theatrical youth groups, where the church can accommodate a studio for creation. Such a strategy preserves the public value of the building and secures a link with the community, with the hope that this cooperation can be sustainable financially. Such proposal has been well received and the results are yet to be measured.[81]

For the concern of architects and design professionals, church abandonment on the rise (in Québec at least) will leave cities an important amount of empty spaces of worship: an occasion to reiterate the alarming importance of this matter. By proposing preservation strategies and design interventions which perhaps no one dared to explore yet, we may reveal new potentials of revitalization and relaunch the discussion on what a church can become today.

And churches, after having died temporarily from abandonment, can be reborn, purged from a conservative perception and reintegrate communities that value the beauties of a church typology, not quite the ones that can be seen, but mainly the ones that can be felt.

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81 Noppen, Luc, interview by Michel Désautels, Société, Radio Canada. May 17, 2013, http://www.radio-canada.ca/emissions/desautels/2012-2013/chronique.asp?idChronique=293182

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