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Between the local and the global: how a group of visual artists from Montreal construct and situate themselves in an 'unbound culture'

par

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Ce mémoire intitulé:

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Summary

This research explored the processes of culture production by two groups of contemporary visual artists, one immigrant and the other Quebecois *de souche*, working and living in Montreal, in terms of describing their life experiences, especially transcultural/translocal notions of space and identity. A constructivist framework was used as it considers reality as socially constructed within the same social space and allows for multiple voices, objects, and identities. Furthermore, anthropological theories that consider the different flows of people, ideas, objects, and capital across local and global boundaries allow us to reconsider the relationship between culture/Culture, place and the people who inhabit this space. Life histories centred on the inseparable life/art experience of artists allow a new light to be cast on the social universe of the Western art world and the production of cultural values in general. In this study it was shown that all of the artists, whether immigrant or Quebecois, share a common approach to life, a transcultural/translocal space, indeed a lifestyle, a shared 'global' space, experiential and imagined, in their discourse, even though their local experiences of artistic practice are different, and are tied to several 'external' factors, the most influential one being the organization of the Montreal and Quebec art world, especially as it pertains to funding for the artists. In fact, it appears that immigrant artists create translocal spaces because they feel are excluded from the main places where art is located in Montreal. Furthermore, Quebecois artists, because of their greater "integration" into the local "symbolic universe" are able to appropriate the space shared by immigrant artists, albeit in part involuntarily since they are also seeking legitimation for the same limited 'places of art'. Relations of power are very real in the situations presented here, and boundaries can then

be seen as managing the tension between lifestyle, which opposes the dichotomising bureaucratic reality of 'us' and 'them'.

Résumé

Ce mémoire est une recherche qui explore comment deux groupes d'artistes en arts visuels, un 'immigrant', l'autre québécois 'de souche', qui habitent et travaillent à Montréal, construisent leurs identités sociales/politiques et produisent de la culture, à travers une description de leurs expériences de vie, surtout en terme de notion d'espace transculturel/translocal. Des récits de vie centrés sur l'expérience indivisible d'art/vie peut illuminer l'univers social du monde de l'art occidental (cf. Becker, 1982), et la production de la culture en général.

Ce type de recherche a été largement ignoré par une grande partie de l'anthropologie. L'art occidental était surtout considéré comme élitiste se séparant de la culture "de masse", et donc pas assez exotique pour l'anthropologie. Pourtant, l'art et la culture restent des espaces de contestation (Marcus and Myers, 1995) où les identités se construisent et se reconstruisent en cherchant la légitimation. Dans ce sens, pour les artistes des deux groupes qui essaient tant bien que mal de vivre à Montréal en tant qu'artistes, l'enjeu est d'autant plus grand.

Très peu d'écrits peuvent servir de toile de fond pour cette recherche, et donc elle reste majoritairement exploratoire. En fait, la littérature qui porte spécifiquement sur les artistes immigrants et surtout sur leur intégration dans le milieu de l'art vient de Montréal (Nguyen, 1989; Aguirre, 1997; Bellavance, 1999b; Langevin, 1999). D'autres écrits traitent surtout de la relation entre l'art et l'exil (Barron, 1997; Nemiroff, 1997; Suleiman,

1997). Malaise? Ou reflets d'un temps (éclaté) marqué par une intensification des différents mouvements de gens, d'idées, d'objets, de capital?

Une des conséquences de ces processus transnationaux a été l'intensification du trafic vers l'Occident d'objets de création non-occidentale. Ceci a permis à l'anthropologie de s'intéresser aux pratiques et discours des mondes de l'art occidentaux, qui ont approprié ces objets en tant qu'objets d'art. L'intérêt porte surtout sur la manière dont le monde de l'art a maintenu sa séparation du reste de la culture, quelque chose qui est impensable en anthropologie, science holistique, où toute chose fait partie de la culture. Tout de même, paradoxalement, l'anthropologie dans sa recherche de culture trouva *des* cultures qu'elle enferma et même bâillonna pendant longtemps. Le mythe romantique du primitif (le naturel, authentique, simple, etc.) transmis à travers un discours public de l'anthropologie irait se propager dans le monde de l'art où les avant-gardes du début du siècle allait se l'approprier pour briser un conformisme esthétique et social du temps (Marcus et Myers, 1995). Un des problèmes c'est que le «primitif» au lieu de représenter l'autre distant soudain devint réel, l'autre proche. D'après Miller (1991), c'était la 'mission' de l'art d'empêcher la fragmentation d'un mode devenu industriel et capitaliste (artificiel, inauthentique, compliqué), et l'image du «primitif» allait l'aider dans cette tâche.

Une approche constructiviste est mon choix de cadre théorique, puisqu'elle conçoit la réalité en tant que construite par les individus et permet des voix, objets, et identités multiples dans un même espace social. Cette approche se joint bien au cadre des soi-

disant nouvelles tendances anthropologiques qui, en traitant de différents processus globalisants et localisants, ont mis en question la notion de cultures stables, statiques, enracinés dans un endroit particulier, et donc la notion d'identités culturelles immuables (Berger et Luckmann, 1967). D'après Berger and Luckmann, le monde est représenté par une multitude de réalités qui sont en compétition l'une avec l'autre, toutes essayant de gagner sa légitimation au sein de sa société. De plus, des réalités peuvent s'autonomiser, dans une société de plus en plus complexifiée, et donc de créer des «sous-univers» à l'intérieur de l'«univers symbolique», cette 'totalité' et ultime niveau de légitimation d'une société. Le besoin de légitimation sociale de la réalité d'un individu est associé à la construction d'univers symboliques. Donc, à travers des constructions idéologiques de réalité et de ses représentations, tous les individus veulent maintenir la stabilité et l'unité de leur espace vital. Ce n'est pas simplement une question de relations hiérarchisées des uns envers les autres. Les frontières sont muables, car chaque individu peut changer, ou questionner, ou remplacer ces constructions idéologiques de la réalité.

À l'intérieur de ce cadre nous pouvons en ajouter un autre, qui prendrait compte des processus transnationaux qui influencent la manière dont les individus construisent leur réalité, essayant de trouver légitimation dans un contexte local et global (Appadurai, 1990, 1991; Gupta et Ferguson, 1992; Hannerz, 1996; Clifford, 1997). La culture en ce sens devient un véritable site de contestation où les différentes constructions de réalité se confrontent, où différents «univers symboliques» s'affrontent. La notion de place (local) et d'espace (global) devient pertinente dans ce cas, puisque justement c'est les frontières qui entourent les espaces que les individus construisent qui sont en jeu. En fait, des

espaces délimités clairement n'existent pas seuls dans l'espace global, constitués de (grandes) villes et de leurs réseaux interconnectés. L'espace comme place est mieux compris en tant que construction sociale d'une «communauté de relations» (Gupta et Ferguson, 1992). En ce sens le terme translocal convient pour décrire la réalité d'un groupe d'artistes qui essaient de construire leur vie à Montréal.

Dans ce cadre, je fait l'hypothèse que les artistes immigrants, comparés aux artistes québécois, travaillant et habitant à Montréal, seraient plus sensible à une notion transculturelle/translocale d'espace et d'identité, une sensibilité démontrée à travers les descriptions de l'espace social/artistique qu'ils occupent. Une hypothèse additionnelle, examinée en surface, postule que les artistes québécois vont démontrer une position intermédiaire, donc une qui se situerait entre l'affirmation d'une identité artistique/sociale locale ou régionale et une qui est transculturelle/transnationale.

Montréal est une ville culturellement plurielle (dans tous ses sens), qui se situe d'une certaine façon entre Paris et New York (encore les deux points focaux qui représentent les centres de l'art); qui vit une tension entre les rhétoriques nationalisantes canadiennes et québécoises; et où ses divers mondes d'art (musées, galeries parallèles, galeries commerciales, maisons de la culture, etc.) se croisent et s'entrecroisent. Dans ce sens, elle ne devient pas seulement une place et un espace pour de nouvelles imaginations de la culture, mais aussi une place pour la construction d'identité sociale et artistique à l'intérieur d'un cadre où les discours identitaires publics prennent une place proéminente, surtout à l'intérieur des médias intellectuels.

Dans ce contexte se développe la pratique artistique de deux groupes d'artistes. Cette pratique, aujourd'hui dans un âge de créativité diffuse, est plurielle et multiple, «un réseau-en-devenir», où la vie privée s'entremêle avec la vie publique, où la frontière entre vie et art s'efface (Nicolas-Le Strat, 1997). C'est à l'intérieur de cet espace de vie d'artiste, un style de vie, que l'artiste doit négocier les frontières entre les différentes pratiques artistiques et les différentes 'définitions' de l'art («art comme nécessité», «art comme profession», et «art comme carrière») (Bernier et Perrault, 1985).

Pour obtenir les données nécessaires pour cette recherche, douze artistes habitant et travaillant à Montréal ont été choisis. Huit sont des artistes qui ont émigrés à Montréal entre 1977 et 1994 et quatre sont Québécois «de souche» qui proviennent des 'Régions' et qui se sont établis à Montréal entre presque les mêmes années que les artistes immigrants. Les artistes immigrants viennent de différentes régions du monde, et sont tous francophones, à l'exception d'un individu, qui comprenait bien le français mais avait de la difficulté à le parler. Pour obtenir des sections du récit de vie, des entrevues semi-dirigées étaient établies. Un guide d'entretien aidait à garder l'entrevue centrée sur certains thèmes. Une analyse thématique centrée sur certaines notions de la conjonction vie/art a permis de cerner et de débrousser toute l'information collectionnée. Malheureusement, la recherche a ses limites, dont le nombre d'artistes interviewé qui est assez petit et n'inclut pas par exemple des artistes québécois anglophone ou québécois de parents immigrants. Les portraits d'artistes qui en ressortent sont assez clairs. La plupart des artistes appartiennent à la même génération esthétique, de plus ils font tous une

pratique multidisciplinaire en art. Tous, sauf un autodidacte mais avec une scolarité universitaire, ont reçu une éducation spécialisée en art visuels. Ce qui est pertinent aussi c'est que ces artistes ne vivent pas de leur art, souvent ayant un travail connexe à l'art.

Les données de cette recherche confirment mon hypothèse initiale, qu'en fait les artistes immigrants sont plus sensibles à un espace transculturel/translocal. Aussi a été confirmé la deuxième hypothèse, que les artistes québécois créent une identité qui se situerait entre le local et le translocal/transculturel. Se basant sur les différents thèmes alliant vie/pratique artistique, est ressortie une image d'artistes qui négocient, construisent, et articulent leur identité à l'intérieur de deux espaces (globaux) et deux places (locales) qui se croisent, et se superposent, dont les frontières sont muables/movibles. Place 1 représente la place des origines, la ville, le village. Espace 1, c'est la pratique artistique. Place 2 nous amène à Montréal. Finalement Espace 2 c'est les réseaux et les mouvements dans lesquels les artistes québécois et immigrants sont impliqués.

En fin de compte, il est démontré dans cette étude que les artistes, qu'ils soient immigrants ou québécois «de souche», partagent dans leur discours une approche commune à la vie, en fait un style de vie 'urbain intellectuel', un espace global partagé, réel et imaginé, même si leurs expériences localisées de pratique artistique sont différentes, liées à plusieurs facteurs extérieurs, dont le plus important est l'organisation même du monde de l'art (et de la culture) à Montréal, surtout quand il est question de subvention. Les relations de pouvoir sont réelles dans les situations présentées ici, et les

différentes frontières qui en ressortent peuvent être vues comme des moyens de gérer la tension entre les attitudes privées/style de vie qui s'opposent à la réalité bureaucratique qui sépare «nous» et «eux». Autant que la plupart des artistes vivent la même réalité précaire socialement, politiquement, économiquement et culturellement, tous les artistes trouvent des moyens créatifs pour être légitimés. Cependant, les artistes immigrants ont ce désavantage de n'avoir pas le support de réseaux bien établis ou ne jouissent pas d'un support institutionnel qu'ont les artistes québécois. En fait les artistes immigrants créent des espaces transculturels/translocaux dans lesquels ils peuvent s'insérer pour maximiser peut être la viabilité de leur pratique vie/art dans un contexte très localisé, qu'est Montréal. Tous les artistes parlent de partage et d'échanges : maintenant la porte est ouverte, il n'y a qu'à passer les frontières des Places 1 et 2, et de rentrer dans les Espaces 1 et 2.

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Acknowledgments

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à tous ces êtres
qui font de l'art
leur vie
et
de leur vie
un art

Preface

This subject of this research, how two groups of visual artists, one immigrant and the other Quebecois *de souche* situate themselves within a translocal/transcultural space while working in a localized place, stems from a personal concern that originated in my many wanderings, from Algeria to Poland, to Nova Scotia and finally to Montreal, where I work and live presently as an artist. I *inhabit* now Montreal, a city, which is culturally 'plural' in every sense of the word, and especially, where discourses on identity (public and private) are particularly prosaic. This is an island caught between Quebecois and Canadian nationalist rhetoric, and entangled in opposing policies of Federal multiculturalism and provincial interculturalism. A 'Janus city', with its head turned to Europe on one hand and to the United Stated on the other. A public space where notions of cultural democracy (equal access for all 'types' of culture; the 'plural-relative') and cultural democratization (equal access of 'great works of art' to the greatest number; the 'universal') play out their tension. A dynamic city which is quite unique, indeed. Within this context, I wondered what it means to be an artist today, a cultural producer, especially since there seemed to be an ambiguous space in which I find myself from time to time; a space defined by some tension that is lived not only as an artist but also as someone who immigrated here almost fifteen years ago. Nothing could be more personal. Although I do not define myself in some totalising forms, as (only) Polish, or immigrant, many times I was 'discursively' prompted to do so. Perhaps it was to simplify a multiple personal trajectory. The point must be made here this research was not done with advocacy for immigrant artists in mind. There are no identity politics here.

In fact, it is quite the opposite. Most immigrant artists refuse to be categorized as such and to be ghettoized into galleries, which are aimed only at them. Because I am just a novice and thus at the margins of the Montreal art world and its rhetoric (although I do not always escape it myself), I was able to gain a better understanding not only of the lives of the artists interviewed and also insight into the sometimes harsh world of visual arts as it developed and develops in Montreal.

Introduction

> More recently, in contemporary cultural life, art has come to occupy a space long associated with anthropology, becoming one of the main sites for tracking, representing, and performing the effects of difference in contemporary life. – G. Marcus and F. Myers, 1995.

Perhaps it is obvious for most that contemporary visual artists are cultural producers of a particular type. However, their perceptions vis-à-vis the cultural (in the anthropological sense) and Culture (in the 'classical' sense), and thus, how they situate themselves locally and globally in a world marked by an unprecedented movement of people, ideas, objects and capital across state and other boundaries, has until recently been mostly overlooked or simply ignored by anthropologists. Western art was separated from culture, which came to be defined as "mass" culture; and artists (or even immigrants) were not exotic enough to warrant most anthropological enquiries.

The limited social research found concerning immigrant artists in Quebec, who refuse to adopt standard social categories such as "immigrant" or "ethnic", has mostly focused on problems of professional integration in the society of adoption (Nguyen, 1989; Bellavance, 1999b). Other writings are essays concerned with the social and economic conditions of immigrant artists and their views on Quebec society (Aguirre, 1995; Langevin, 1999). There is also a number of texts which focus on exile as exoticism or in terms of movement or hybridity (e.g. Barron, 1997; Nemiroff, 1998; Suleiman, 1998). After all, in urban intellectual settings, it is common-sense knowledge that

movement is an intrinsic part of being an artist, as are concerns with exile as a metaphor for modern society.

This thesis will explore the process of culture production by two groups of contemporary visual artists, one immigrant and the other Quebecois *"de souche"*, working and living in Montreal, in terms of describing their life experiences, especially their transcultural/translocal notions of space and identity. As such, this research will try to challenge the certainties of boundary-making processes, especially how these have been affected by academic practices, by examining the role of place and space, imaginary and experiential, in the conceptualisation and construction of life/art practice(s) by these artists. Life histories centred on the inseparable life/art experience of artists allow a new light to be cast on the social universe of the Western art world and the production of cultural values in general.

A constructivist framework (Berger and Luckmann, 1986) will be the primary theoretical framework used to frame my examination of place and space. It considers reality as socially constructed within the same social space and allows for multiple voices, objects, and identities. This theoretical approach considers the individual as one who manipulates, constructs, and produces 'culture' in a process of social legitimation, as opposed to the position widely accepted by certain ideologues in which the individual is considered as a receptacle for 'culture'. Furthermore, recent anthropological studies which analysed the processes and conditions of a world marked by processes of globalisation and localisation (e.g. Clifford, 1997; Hannerz, 1996; Marcus and Myers,

1995; Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Appadurai, 1991) have questioned the idea that cultures, and consequently, people are 'naturally' rooted and bounded in particular places. These transcultural/translocal processes, which have intensified the traffic of 'traditional non-Western' art-objects in the West, allowed anthropology to take a more critical look at the practices and the discourse of the Western art world(s), especially its insistence on maintaining art as a distinct sphere of culture (Marcus and Myers, 1995; Miller, 1991). However, the methodological and especially the theoretical implications of these anthropological reflections are still being worked out.

The nature of this research will remain exploratory both in terms of the specificity and the complexity of its subject. There is very little literature which can serve as a *toile de fond* for this thesis, whether specifically from the point of view of the subject itself or from a theoretical one, since only recently has there been a serious attempt by anthropologists to analyse the gap between contemporary anthropological perspectives on identity and representation and these received ideas of art as a distinct dimension of cultural processes of representation.

A brief contextualization of artistic practice, and therefore the identity of the artist, and of Montreal's artistic *milieu* in particular demonstrates a complex and dynamic play of interactions, intrinsically linked to the way this(these) identit(ies) is(are) defined/in-definable (Bernier and Perrault, 1985; Bellavance, 1992; Nicolas-Le Strat, 1997) in/by the Western art world (Becker, 1982). The 'anthropological' character and multiplicity of artistic practices are two overlapping aspects that are relevant for this

research. It appears that contemporary artistic practice is a lifestyle, in which attempts are made to abolish the duality between art and life. Furthermore, artists and their practices are not the product of individual creativity as such, but rather the result of multiple trajectories. They are part of an intricate network, not only of people but also of practices and places in which frontiers are constantly breached or shifted (Bernier and Perrault, 1985; Bellavance, 1992; Nicolas-Le Strat, 1997).

In terms of the place itself, Montreal is not only the metropolis of Quebec (where questions of cultural identity and politics are never far from public discourses), it is also one of the major cultural centres of Canada. It is, however, on the margins and at the centre of the Western art world, situated 'between' Paris and New York. Artistic practice in Montreal is multiple, not only in terms of the different artistic disciplines and 'aesthetic generations' (Fournier, 1986)[1], but also in terms of the spaces/places it defines, such as museums, parallel galleries, commercial galleries, and public spaces. In this light it becomes not only a place and space for new imaginings of culture and art but also a place for the construction of a social and artistic identity within a framework where identity issues are foremost in explicit public discourses, specially the media intelligentsia.

The method of semi-directed interviews with key informants was used in order to complete our study. Our sample is limited for several reasons: (1) the time period

[1] The differences in artistic practices (and the discourses that accompany them) can be attributed to many factors, one which is the 'aesthetic generation' the artist belongs to. This notion of 'aesthetic generation' does not necessarily correspond to the age of the artist, but rather it is related to the context in which the artist received his education and from which his artistic practice was evolving (Fournier, 1986).

allocated for this study was simply too short to include more artists; (2) there was a difficulty in identifying "immigrant" artists; (3) there was a lack of interest by many artists in participating in an anthropological study. Furthermore, the aim of this study is not a statistical representation but rather the exploratory comparison of particular themes in the discourse and life experience of two groups of artists. The collection of life histories did not happen without difficulties. The main one had to do with scheduling of meetings with artists and/or their subsequent cancellations. Another difficulty had to do with the discussions themselves. Artists had much difficulty in separating a certain theorising of their life/work (their 'centre' being the art-work) from the actual 'practice' of life, and second, French was the second or third language of all of the immigrant artists.

The analysis of the data brings forth certain particularities concerning the manner in which artists situate themselves within a local and a global context, and thus how they construct their social and artistic identity within the notion of a transcultural/translocal space. It also clarifies certain notions about artistic practice and its relationship with the production of culture. The guiding hypothesis is that immigrant visual artists, as compared to visual artists who situate themselves as "Quebecois", working and living on the island of Montreal, will be particularly sensitive to a transcultural/translocal notion of space and identity, a sensitivity demonstrated in relatively complex descriptions of practices in the social and artistic spaces they occupy. Additionally, a secondary hypothesis is superficially explored, that Quebecois artists will occupy a more ambivalent space in which it is possible to both affirm a local identity centred on a regional

social/artistic identity and affirm a transcultural/translocal one.

This thesis has as its main objectives: (1) to situate the artists' discourse in a larger debate on the processes of culture production in a context of transcultural/translocal processes; (2) to situate it in a greater discussion on boundary making practices by anthropology and Western art worlds; (3) to see if there is a difference between two groups of artists in the definition of their socio-political, and artistic identity, especially in terms of the space they occupy. The relationship art/culture/life and local/global/space constitute essential elements of this study.

The lack of information on this subject, as well as its trans-disciplinarity and contemporaneity, demonstrate the utility and the timeliness of this research. Furthermore, this type of exploratory research can encourage other researchers to explore further the themes touched upon here. Contemporary anthropology must concern itself with the production of culture (and its various producers) in urban settings, not simply with those 'exotic others' who have been the subject matter of the discipline until recently. As Marcus and Myers (1995: 19) write, "to invoke another culture now is to locate it in a time and space contemporaneous with our own, and thus to see it as part of our world, rather than as a mirror or alternative to ourselves, arising from a totally alien origin".

Chapter 1 Theoretical Framework

> Both from without and from within the world of anthropological observer, these perplexities of identity doubly challenge the goals of a discipline that rejects *exoticism* (the sensationalizing of cultural difference) but nevertheless paradoxically pursues the study of cultural *otherness*" – Herzfeld, 1987.

This research presents an analysis into the processes of culture production by comparing how two groups of contemporary visual artists, one immigrant and the other Quebecois *de souche*, working and living in Montreal, situate themselves and construct their life/art practice(s) in a more 'connected' world. Although some of the literature in anthropology still seems to focus on culture construction and (re)production in small, bounded, localized places, writers such as Hannerz (1996), Appadurai (1990, 1991), and Gupta and Ferguson (1992), as well as Clifford (1997), see a more pressing need in re-orienting anthropology towards the study of transnational ('globalizing') processes (as is the massive and rapid movement of people, ideas, things, capital across state/national boundaries) and their relationship with 'local' practices, since in the late twentieth century the cultural identities of individuals conflate both local and transcultural/translocal influences to an unparalleled level.

In the first part of this chapter the relationship between art and anthropology will be examined briefly. One of the aspects of this thesis is that it delves in the similar trans-space it tries to apprehend in its reflections, one which is trans-disciplinary, caught in the

same difficulty of defining, crossing, and abolishing boundaries as the subjects it studies[1]. Constructivism as approached by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their well-known treatise, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967), as a theoretical framework of choice in the presentation of the visual artists implicated in this study will be the subject of the second section. In the third part, some of the 'new trans-anthropology' will be examined, as well as the theoretical relevance of some of their new vocabulary to the present study. Furthermore, concepts such as 'space' and 'place' will be examined in their relation to 'culture' as a central anthropological and artistic concept, and to the academic practice of boundary making. Finally in the last section the hypothesis which guides this thesis will be presented.

1.1 Anthropology and the Western art world

Although anthropology and visual arts have a long shared history, it is one that has been plagued in 'traditional' anthropology by two contrasting positions. On one hand, it concerned itself with the translation of non-Western ("primitive") "objects" and aesthetics to a Western public by the imposition of Western categories on the description of those arts and their cross-cultural (in)applicability, unfortunately reproducing the essentialism of bad Western social science - i.e. art "and" society, art "and" religion, art "and" rituals, etc. (see Geertz, 1973). On the other hand, it explored the question whether an autonomous field of

[1] The difficulty with a trans-disciplinary approach to art (worlds) in particular is the jungle of discourse one must digest in order to make sense of the contemporary Western art world which is by and large a discursive one in practice, and "critical" and "oppositional" at that. Although artists have a part in this discourse, most of it is the work of art critics, historians, philosophers and sociologists and other mediators of the art worlds. For Marcus and Myers, there is an "unusual difficulty in constituting art worlds and their discursive fields as conventional, distanced objects of ethnographic study in a way that has been possible with dynasts and Aboriginals" (1995: 3). Since artists are part of an art world, they do not escape its rhetoric, and so the difficulty truly lies in taking distance from the discourse and rhetoric of the art worlds.

aesthetic objects and/or practices exists in different cultures. Although it is of note that Western art critics have been helpful in challenging the universality and the essentialism of the category of art, only recently has there been an attempt by anthropologists to do the same by looking critically at the Western "art worlds" themselves and how they produce culture (cf. Marcus and Myers, 1995)[2].

Such a critical stance toward Western art world(s) is presently possible in part due to an increase in the global circulation of non-Western 'objects' and their subsequent appropriation by Western art world(s), and the importance of these 'objects' in the recent theoretical art history debates centred on cultural politics and aesthetics. However, these "postmodern critical" writings have an explicit focus on the discursive practices of the Western art world(s), especially those discourses which involve mediation/mediators (collectors, museums, art markets), since these are the artistic practices where the anthropological conceptions of "difference" and "culture" are most prominent, and also where power relations are clearer. In this critical anthropology, the aim at 'a greater picture' seems to omit the artists, the very people who are at the centre of the art production and who remain at the margins of the art world(s). Nonetheless this position is important in situating today's discussions about (the) contemporary art world(s). The point here is not to pass judgement on these practices and their claims to truth, or to define art or art worlds, but rather to give a historical frame of reference in/from which artists (as social

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This distance is complicated by the very fact that this author is a participant of the art world, albeit still at its margins.

[2] Although both anthropological and art critical discourse are rooted partly in a shared history, they have usually been at odds with each other; on the one hand, anthropology was strongly criticized for its objectivity and its fieldwork practice as mediated experience; on the other hand, the artistic avant-garde was frowned upon for its cult of strangeness and the exotic, and shock-as-value positions (Marcus and Myers, 1995).

actors, even with a limited, possible or minimal 'critical consciousness' of their own and broader conditions of life), produce cultural meaning and value in (a given) society. As Marcus and Myers (1995) write, "ethnographic practice is both suspicious of any essentialisms of 'cultural difference' and also wary of presenting *its* knowledge as challenging the *absolute* truth claims of participants" (p.9, italics in original).

In this section, inspired by Marcus and Myers (1995) and Miller (1991), we will explore one of the main common denominators of art and anthropology, namely "othering" as boundary-making practice. First, quoting Marcus and Myers, it must be established what is meant here by the Western art world(s):

> "(...) the contemporary, Western-centred tradition of fine arts that began with the birth of modernism and a transformed art market out of the previously dominant Academy system in nineteenth-century France. This is a world still defined, even with its postmodern attempts at transformation, by the creation of aesthetic experience through the disinterested contemplation of objects as *art* objects removed from instrumental associations (p.3; italics in original)[3].

As they draw on their common Enlightenment *and* Romantic tradition, it is of value that it is mainly by 'distancing' or 'othering' that both anthropology and art criticism relate to their subjects. Although each one constitutes its essentializing boundaries in different ways, both are bounded in the way they evoke difference through the construction of cultural value. If the central concern of modern Western art was with the question art/non-

[3] It must be also noted that Marcus and Myers' study reflects on the post-WWII American art world, with its centre in New York. Although certainly Montreal, and Canada in general, has been influenced by the American developments in the art world, there are no inflationary art markets here as you would find in the U.S. The main similarity between the two nations, and of concern here, is thus not in terms of art markets, but rather in term of the category of art as an inclusive/exclusive social sphere, and its Western ethnocentrism/Eurocentrism. Furthermore, the Western art world is plural (with all it variations) but is singular in its apparent autonomy from other social spheres.

art, high culture/low culture, and thus, with the boundary between art and the rest of culture (and therefore its own autonomy), then the central problem for anthropology has been to develop a holistic approach to culture ('life as lived'), with no isolation of one dimension of cultural life, such as art, from others. This led to paradox, since anthropology avoided studying the boundary-making, 'othering' tendencies of a 'unified' art world, the self-proclaimed 'higher Culture', while at the same time, it privileged the relativistic anthropological approach to the study of 'pure cultures', those 'primitive', neatly packaged, stable 'other' cultures located in various places around the globe, who often fed the imaginings of Western contemporary artists (Marcus and Myers, 1995).

In both cases, there was a search for some essential (totalizing) truths about human nature. Both were squirming between conflicts of relativism and universalism (Miller, 1991). As Miller points out, art as a category was given as its prerogative to counter and transcend the fragmentation ("alienation") of contemporary life in the industrial era in the West. Thus, aided by a public image of the anthropologists' work, there developed in the modern art world a stable view of the "primitive" as an oppositional figure to the inauthentic, rational, individualistic, industrial society. Out of a deeply entrenched Romantic nostalgia, this figure of "otherness" embodied origin(ality), simplicity and naturalness in/as a totality of a humanity past and for a humanity in the future. The avantgarde especially saw in the artistic creation of "primitives" a source of creativity that was to confront existing visual and even social conventions (Miller, 1991; Marcus and Myers, 1995). The myth of the "primitive", as historical totality, however, became projected onto the not-so-distant, contemporaneous 'other'. Thus, embedded in the same

Eurocentric history, the Western art world constituted its own statist ideology and rhetoric in the same way as a nation state or as the discipline of anthropology would (cf. Herzfeld, 1987). Anthropology, through its own boundary-making ethnographic production, offered not only the impetus but also the intellectual legitimacy for these powerful discursive and rhetorical practices in the art world, and in a way it still does when some anthropologists lament over the disappearance of cultural diversity. Many artists in the West *and* non-West also reiterate the myth of primitivism in their work.

For the most part the essentializing and Eurocentric tendencies of these two fields have been criticised, not always with positive results; for example, in texts by Western art commentators about art made by contemporary "other" non-Western artists. These texts usually concentrate on the 'representative role' of these artists, often reducing their work to a symbol of "collective identity" without inquiring as to the manner in which these icons of identity are used and manipulated in strategies of social positioning (e.g. Isajiw, 1991). As well there are more and more writings of non-Western artists/critics (well versed in postcolonial/postmodern theorising) that usually concern themselves with Western art's ethnocentrism and its 'cultural hegemony", or that present debates over the West's unabated and unreserved appropriations of non-Western art forms; or with the consistent exclusion of artists from the "periphery" in the big international shows of the "centre" (cf. Fisher, 1994)[4]. It goes without saying that it is easy for the non-Western commentators participating in similar (albeit parallel) forms of the Western art world to fall into a similar essentializing trap as the one created by critics of the dominant Western art world(s), as a local form of identity politics takes over their discourse.

All in all, the present critique in anthropology and in art must concern itself with the "significance of culture as an arena of contest, (...) since the art world remains one of the primary arenas in which discourses about cultural values are being produced" (Marcus and Myers, 1995: 11). Therefore, in this light, how "immigrant" visual artists (living and working in North America, the locus of the 'dominant' Western art world), who 'exist' as threads of a given social and cultural fabric, making 'art' as part of the larger cultural 'production'[5], situate themselves, construct their reality and find legitimation in their practice (and are legitimated by it), especially in the light of an apparent intensification of transnational processes, and whether they readily reproduce the Western art rhetoric and ideology, are pertinent issues, that few studies in the social sciences have looked at seriously. This is relevant if we are to accept that "art continues to be the space in which difference, identity and cultural value are being produced and contested" (Marcus and Myers, 1995: 11).

1.2 Constructivism

Recent trends in anthropological theory try to explain the individual as one who manipulates cultural elements as he/she negotiates and implements various strategies of identity (that is, the individual inside culture). This is in opposition to Western ideological constructs, which often posit the individual as a receptacle for culture (and all of its vicissitudes) and see culture as something static and unchanging. How people construct

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[4] For example, the Venice Biennial is one such show.

[5] 'Cultural production' here is meant in an broader sense than the result of what cultural industries make. The usual meaning of these terms is in relation to the commodification of culture. And the greatest abusers of this terminology are certainly policy makers at all levels of government.

their social and cultural identity and how they find legitimation can be explored through the study of the meanings people give to their own and broader conditions of life (events, experiences, people, and objects).

Constructivism, as presented by Berger and Luckmann (1967) considers human reality as socially constructed through negotiation. Humans are seen to be engaged in the perpetual cycle of the "dialectic" of creating the objective reality socially and in turn internalising these very created realities as their own. According to the authors, it is through ideological constructions of reality and/or its representations that all individuals want to ensure the coherence of their living space, and not just to dominate others[6]. In this light, individuals do not only carry institutionalised social representations but also have the capacity to question these representations, to alter them or even to replace them by others. Boundaries are then social constructions that one can cross[7].

In constructivism, the world is seen as consisting of multiple (competing) realities (and social identities) with individuals capable of directing consciousness to different spheres of these realities, and where boundaries at all levels may be crossed. The reality of every day life is a knowledge that is for the most part, taken for granted and is contingent upon the context by and in which it is constructed[8]. It forms the basis and is a tool for the social construction of other realities. Other realities "appear as finite provinces of

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[6] The question related to action of humans on their world is related to various theoretical considerations in social sciences with political action and ideology. Several theoreticians, for example Giddens (1979) and Bourdieu (1977), challenged thus the tendencies to reify "culture" and "ideology".

[7] In anthropology, the greatest exponent of this view is F. Barth (1969), who looked at the different processes involved in the construction and maintenance of ethnic groups.

meaning, enclaves within the paramount reality marked by circumscribed meanings and modes of experience" (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 25). In their institutionalised representation they can be seen as "subuniverses". Thus, based on the authors' propositions, the art world can be seen as a "subuniverse", subsumed inside the totality of the society's "symbolic universe"[9]. As subuniverses become more autonomous, more local problems of legitimation for outsiders and insiders are created. Outsiders must be kept out while insiders in through the manipulation of a localized rhetoric.

The formation of symbolic universes is tied to a need of the social legitimation of an individual's reality. The purpose of legitimation is to explain and validate existing institutions so that their presence is seen by individuals as subjectively plausible and acceptable: it tells you not only how things should be done, but also what things are in the first place[10].

The symbolic universe is the ultimate level of legitimation and of reality construction, since "this is the sphere, of course, to which all forms of institutional conduct and roles belong" and are integrated (*ibid*: 98)[11]. In the words of the authors, "the entire

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[8] When constructed by individuals, "reality" (as the quality of phenomena that appear to have a life of their own) becomes "knowledge" (the certainty that the phenomena are real and that they possess certain characteristics).

[9] Yet, roles may be reified in the same manner as institutions, where both eventually are seen as inevitable (totalities), or as fate. In this view, the "new" and critical anthropology, which examines modern Western art worlds, stands as a corrective in the de-reification of such social institutionalized representations and constructions as is the Western art world.

[10] According to Berger and Luckmann, it is a "second-order" objectivation, with the first-order objectivation being those meanings attached to the institutional processes themselves in need of legitimiation.

[11] The authors show three previous levels of legitimation, and construction of reality. The first one is the incipient legitimation that goes along with the objectivation of human experiences (the pretheoretical or the "that's how things are done" level upon which all subsequent theories will rest). The second level is the knowledge of everyday life, which groups theoretical propositions in their rudimentary form. The third

historic society and the entire biography of the individual are seen as events taking place *within* this universe" (p. 96). It is as an entirely theoretical dimension, free of institutional constraints, but one which is a social product with a history. In this light, "symbolic universes" represent 'culture' in its 'totality', as every day 'practice' and 'theory'.

However the "symbolic universe" is never un-problematic: "because of the inevitable tensions of the processes of institutionalisation, and by the very fact that all social phenomena are *constructions* produced historically through human activity, no society is totally taken for granted and so, *a fortiori*, is no symbolic universe" (*ibid*: 106; italics in original). The degree to which "symbolic universes" have become problematic is the issue. Such problematic situations may occur with the emergence of 'dissidents' inside society, or with contact with previously unknown foreigners, who arrive with different "symbolic universes", which are seen as threatening or incompatible with existing "symbolic universes" in society. The reality of alternative symbolic universes is a threat in that it demonstrates that one's own universe is not ontologically inevitable. From that, they show that the conflict between alternative universes is a question of power[12]. Therefore, in this view we can talk of 'cultural hegemony', where today Western-centred cultural models dominate others.

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level contains explicit theories, codified and institutionalized. Finally the fourth level is the symbolic universe, with its aim of encompassing all institutions in a symbolic totality.

[12] Berger and Luckmann propose a number of "conceptual machineries" with its own "army" of experts, to cope with and legitimate these problems. These mechanisms include mythology, theology, philosophy and science, which are historically the most important ones. The relation between these theories and the underlying institutional processes is dialectic. Thus, as theories are produced in order to legitimate existing social institutions, so social institutions will be transformed in order to fit with produced theories, making them even more legitimate.

All in all, the same legitimating process describes the "'correctness' of the individual's subjective identity". By placing it within the context of a shared symbolic universe, individual identity is thus legitimated, since the symbolic universe is the highest level of shared meanings, although usually finding no signifieds in everyday life. From that, in a final analysis, an individual "can live in society with some assurance that he really is what he considers himself to be as he plays his routine social roles, in broad daylight an under the eye of significant others", and thus, he may assume the responsibility of who he is, does, or constructs (*ibid*: 101). For Berger and Luckmann, it can be thus infered that individual imagination as a socially constructed "thought" experience plays a very important and real aspect of the constructed meanings in life, and it too is not immune to the ideologizing influences of its social context, but rather is susceptible to integration within the larger symbolic universe.

Constructivism is thus a way of apprehending society as part of a constructed human world, which in turn, produces humans in a continuous historical process. In our research, we choose a constructivist framework of analysis, since it allows for multiple voices, multiple objects and multiple identities, and also, allows a detailed description of social reality from the point of view of those who experience this reality. This view tries to penetrate the particular vision of immigrant and Quebecois artists in relation to their lived experience, as they try to legitimate their positions as artists, immigrant or Quebecois. This constructivist framework can thus be taken as the basis for this research which will look at the representations and the meanings these artists give to their lived experience in

the context of a politically 'plural' Montreal situated within broader transnational processes. The representations are the "consciousness" revealed in the artists' discourse.

1.3 Globalization and localization of culture in space

Many will agree that the world, from a Western perspective, seems today a smaller place where cultural identity has taken a front seat. 'Culture' in itself has become a problematic term (not unlike 'art'), one which is globalizing as much as localizing, and one which perhaps means the most and the least at the same time. For the most part it has come to signify the production of difference or otherness (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Abu-Loughod, 1991). Today, some aspect about culture or the cultural can be heard everywhere, not only in the realm of academia but also present in government discourse, in mass media discourse, in the public and the private domains (Hannerz, 1996). The question becomes how does culture function in the appropriation of space (real and imagined) and the making of identit(ies)?

In many discourses, the word 'culture' can now be written with a copyright "c" and a trademark "tm" at the end: ©ulture™ has become a visible and visual commodity, consumable and readily consumed, self-referential, bounded and an active term in the construction of social positioning and legitimation. Its boundaries are constantly being shifted between an 'encompassing' human reality and a shrinking one, as in the case of much of the asphyxiating politics of identity played out by so many groups (including artists), trying to legitimate themselves within a 'global' and a 'local' context (Hannerz,

1996). However, what has been downplayed is the realisation that 'culture' as constructed by individuals is far more flexible and diverse in its tendency to define space than it has been conceptualised.

In this transnational context, many of the previous anthropological models of belonging and (usually) fixed notions of identity and the nation have become problematic, especially since anthropology is a science that attempts to make generalisations from particular and *localized* events of people caught in various *translocal/transcultural* relationships. This has resulted in a search for conceptual tools which could better describe this (apparently) new social reality of transcultural/translocal[13] connections.

As Appadurai (1991: 193) writes "the loosening of the bonds between people, wealth, and territories fundamentally alters the basis of cultural reproduction". Anthropology needs to ask, "how to deal with cultural difference while abandoning received ideas of (localized) culture. How is the "local" constructed as a lived experience in a "globalized" world? In particular, in this research, we can ask how do immigrant artists (and Quebecois) construct their "local" lived experience while practising an activity perceived as, and which is, "global", and thus one which transcends cultural boundaries (whether physical or imagined). Culture in the context of the present research includes the legitimate, ideologically sanctioned (Quebecois) culture/Culture and the problematic, ambivalent 'other' cultures, both caught in a situation implicating 'globalizing' or transnational processes.

Perhaps the world is characterised by a greater interconnectedness, but not greater homogeneity[14] (Clifford, 1997). In this light, it appears that goods, capital, ideas, and people move across national and state borders easier, faster and in more varied ways than ever before for various economic reasons (as is the 'globalization' of transnational capital); for political reasons (such as the fragmentation of many nation-states and the breakdown of an East-West divide); or technological ones (this includes possibility of using planes, television and other media, phones, and computer technology) (Hannerz, 1996; Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Appadurai, 1990, 1991). Appadurai (1991) especially has thus theorised cultural flows through five "scapes"- finanscapes, ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, and ideoscapes. For Appadurai (1991) it is the link between stability, space and cultural reproduction of the (identity of) the 'group' that needs to be analysed in a deterritorialized world, and in "terms of the negotiation between imagined lives and deterritorialized worlds" (*ibid:* 196).

Another popular concept among various sectors, not only academic, but also commercial and political, pointing to transnational processes has been 'globalization', a term which sounds hollow as it tries to describe the relationship of such complex and diverse processes (Hannerz, 1996). For writers such as Gupta and Ferguson (1992) as well as Appadurai (1990, 1991), the term transnational has greater weight as a label for processes which are not contained by state boundaries, as they invest different spaces, on a

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[13] We decided to use 'translocal' (Clifford, 1997) as well as transcultural simultaneously since they seems to be the best term to describe the reality of individuals as they negotiate their multiple identities across different borders of meanings and actions.

[14] A homogenization of the world can be seen from a perspective of lifestyle and consumption.

differing scale. These transnational processes, define, organise and implicate spaces, which transcend one or more nation-state boundaries and therefore, ignore, circumvent or resist the political spaces legitimated by nation-states, especially at the level of the translocal lived experiences of individuals.

Therefore, in this transnational space, for many authors (e.g. Clifford, 1997; Hastrup and Olwig, 1997; Hannerz, 1996; Gupta and Ferguson, 1992), the focus of anthropological research must still remain on the actors, the individuals, implicated in these processes, and on their "diversity of organisation", whether they are individuals, groups, movements, or corporations. What matter are the relations and networks individuals negotiate across different forms of boundaries. For Gupta and Ferguson (1992), cultural difference is produced and maintained in hierarchical relations and power constellations extending from particular large cities which now characterise the world, as a socially, culturally, and economically interconnected space. Clearly defined places do not exist in and of themselves in this 'global' space of connections. Space as place is better reflected in the cultural construction of 'communities of relations', or networks, formed within an organised space of unequal relations. Thus, in the description of individuals and how they situate themselves, the terms transcultural and translocal seem appropriate, as these terms shift the focus from over-arching 'group' processes where the individual seems more like a victim, to a focus on the creative border crossings of particular lives, and also their location(s), a multitude of (local) spaces and places one can inhabit for longer periods of time (Clifford, 1997). As Sorensen (1997:146) writes, basing herself on Marcus (1992) and Giddens (1990), "personal identity according to (the view in which culture and

society are the ever-changing outcome of practice rather than a pre-existing structure) is a complex sense of being or belonging not derived from one local structure, but actively and strategically constructed in relation to multiple spaces and for a variety of purposes".

Many writers thus emphasise the anthropological importance of the notions of space and place. As anthropologists move in space and the people they study do as well, place and space becomes entangled in various boundaries and social maps. Michel de Certeau has talked of "place as a practised space" (de Certeau, in Hastrup and Olwig, 1997). People, whose experiences overlap and intersect, blur the boundaries of place. Thus, realities are defined in practice, and practice is defined in space, one which can be local or global, imagined or actual, and which often cuts across boundaries. Moreover, for the anthropologist, the field, as the practised place *par excellence*, should be defined in terms not just of its localit(ies) but of its field of relations, "nodal points in the networks of interrelations where there is a mutual construction of identities through cultural encounters" (Hastrup and Olwig, 1997: 5)[15]. This 'processing' of cultural production in terms of place and space, is easily applied to art, which defines itself also in a close relation to these terms. This is evident not simply when discussing artworks inhabiting a particular delimited space, usually a gallery or museum, but also artists who produce their work at a very local level, even if the final intent is to reach a global one. Both artworks and artists cross their local space and place.

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[15] This could be likened to Fernando Ortiz' conception of transculturation, where each 'culture' uses the other's 'traditions' to remake its own. This conception has usually been linked to unidirectionality in cultural flows, rather than to an exchange. Thus, from within the Western point of view, the flow from 'elsewhere' to the West was viewed as progressive and creative, while the flow from the West to 'elsewhere' was seen as imitation. This view has still subsided in certain cultural spheres as the Western art world, even though a critique of both is emerging from the Western and non-Western academic circles.

Clifford (1997), focusing on "routes" rather than "roots", conceives travelling or displacement as being part of cultural meanings. It is cultural action, the making and the remaking of identities, in the contact zones, the different borders, where the "margins, lines and edges of communication emerge as maps and histories" that "a translocal culture (not global or universal)", of multiple attachments, can be enacted (Clifford, 1997). However, in many large cities, the negotiation of contact and border areas, which are created by the arrival of immigrant populations, is historically embedded in relations of dominance. Furthermore, for him, ethnographies should be collages not of the accounts of cultural types or unique individuals but of informants as "complex, historical subjects".

Appadurai's (1991) emphasis on imagination as a new power in social life, especially in the conception of an individual's reality echoes a similar acknowledgement of this 'imagined' space by authors such as Clifford (1997), and Gupta and Ferguson (1992), as well as Hastrup and Olwig (1997). For Gupta and Ferguson (1992), anthropologists should examine more closely the way space is imagined in a world of changing global economical and political conditions of lived space. In fact, it should be simply considered as constitutive of the life experience and not ignored by researchers. Through the spread of technological advances for mobility (physical and 'virtual') - such as the jet, satellite, internet and the television - it is now easier for people to imagine a greater number of possibilities (or limits) in their lives, or to communicate with a greater number of individuals at a faster rate than it was ever possible. Of course the means and the power of

In the light of these 'new' theoretical propositions, the notion of culture itself should not be discarded so soon as an object of study, since it is still that "peculiar capacity of human beings for creating and maintaining their own lives together: (Hannerz, 1996: 43), however, it is the practice of boundary making and the assumption of discontinuity and otherness which should be challenged. The multiple overlapping space(s) of culture, as it relates to notions of the local and the global, should be analysed in both the discursive and the experiential spaces that people inhabit or invent and construct, not only in some small and/or remote areas of the world but also in the cosmopolitan big city centres likes Montreal. People still create space(s) and boundaries where they experience their local realities even in so-called cosmopolitan contexts. It must be noted here that globalisation and transnationalism seem as much cultural identity traits linked to young urban artists and professionals as they are to marginal migrants seeking to reconstruct their lives (Hannerz, 1996). The new way of looking at these old anthropological concepts, will allow us to understand a little better the lives of people who have been usually excluded from studies by traditional anthropology, as are immigrants and artists, because they escaped the easy categorizations imposed by conceptions of bounded cultures and static identities.

1.4 Hypothesis

The hypothesis that was formulated and that is the organising idea of the present study is that immigrant artists as compared to Quebecois visual artists, working and living on the island of Montreal, will be more sensitive towards a transcultural/translocal notion of space and identity, a sensitivity demonstrated through the descriptions of the

social/artistic spaces they occupy by means of deploying identities deriving from their life experiences. Some of the questions related to this hypothesis include the following: will these artists situate themselves inside identity artistic discourses, which are universalistic/universalising or particularistic/individualistic? Will they try to achieve recognition in local, national or international terms? If they consider that their art is transcendental and/or transcultural/translocal, are they locally "plugged-in" or "connected"? Do they recuperate and reiterate the Western rhetoric of the artist as bohemian/nomad/cosmopolitan? Do they react against or simply ignore nationalist ideology? Are their artistic and social networks many and diversified? What place does travel occupy in them? Additionally, a secondary hypotheses based on the first one is also explored: the Quebecois artists will demonstrate an intermediary position, meaning, one which is situated between the affirmation of a local or regional social/artistic identity and the affirmation of a transcultural/translocal one.

Chapter 2 The Context

> L'artiste sera toujours vie et changement, tout comme la realité dont on dit qu'il est l'interprète, et qui, loin d'être constante, est le concept variable que nous en construisons. – Antoni Tàpies, 1971.

In this chapter I will look at the context necessary for the comprehension of the data collected in this research. In contemporary art (in Montreal and elsewhere), whether from an art historical, sociological or philosophical/critical point of view, most recent research has situated itself within the raging debate surrounding a crisis in contemporary art, the demise of the avantgarde and the end of the utopia of art, or the autonomy of art (e.g. Rochlitz, 1994; Jimenez, 1995; Bellavance, 1996; Dagen, 1997). Specifically in the sociology of art, studies focused on the constitution of boundaries in art (Becker, 1982), artists' economic condition, social integration, or professionalisation (Moulin, 1983; Lacroix, 1990; Bellavance, 1992), or on the mediators/mediation of works of art (e.g. Hennion, 1998, 1993). In Quebec in particular, at least two (micro)sociological studies, notably the research by Bernier and Perrault (1985), and Marcel Fournier (1986) concerned themselves with artistic practice (the artist as part of a process) defined by artists. Another sociological approach (Nicolas-Le Strat, 1997) also brings insight into emerging contemporary artistic practices in an "age of diffused creativity". Thus, firstly, the contextualisation presented here involves a brief exploration of the constitution of artistic identity and practice pertaining to visual arts, especially its plural and 'anthropological' character; secondly a description of Montreal as the locus of the research and artistic practice.

In this section I will not try to define 'art'[1] as such, or to discuss 'art movements', or to make an exhaustive inventory of all the theorising and rhetoric that animate debates and discourses especially on contemporary art in Montreal, most of which (for obvious reasons) centre on the material aspect of art, i.e. the art objects (or non-objects) themselves[2]. Rather, putting aside the artistic rhetoric and idealised position towards the artist[3], this research is preoccupied with how these practices and their protagonists, the artists, situate and articulate themselves in producing culture in relation to their environment.

2.1 Artistic practice

Although the image of the lonely (tortured/alienated) artist is still very much with us, artistic practice

> is tied by delicate webs and deft knots to personal relations, cultural traditions, economic organisations and political rule. Like our very sanity, it depends in great measure on the understandings, standards, and supports that come from the social world we live in (Rueschemeyer, 1985: 156).

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[1] 'Art' as a category remains commonplace to most people in the West independent of the problem of its (auto) definition as a social category/field/sphere separate from culture. Most of all, it remains associated "with essential value in relation to a generalized human capacity for spirituality or creativity" (Marcus and Myers, 1995: 7). Indeed, even in the newest university primers on cultural anthropology there is a commonplace view of arts as a universal means to express/communicate cultural identity, in as much as arts are creative activities (resulting in utilitarian and non-utilitarian objects) found in all known human cultures (Nanda, 1998). However, it is also commonly acknowledged that the attempt at a universal criteria independent of the cultural context (based on a distanced/detached observation of an 'art object' placed in a 'decontextualized', white-walled, space, the art gallery/museum) is based on Western ethnocentrism/Eurocentrism. Again the focus in this perspective is on the product (art 'object') not the person (the artist) and the process (practice).

[2] As Marcus and Myers (1995) indicated, artwork is the rhetorical mode of most arttalk/writing.

[3] Nicolas-Le Strat (1997) sees the need to get rid of an idealized view of the artist where his artistic activity is solely seen through some essences as is talent, freedom of expression, vocation; all these constituents of an artistic ideology that are still very strong in the art world.

Artists are part of an "imagined community"[4] (Anderson, 1983) of communicative, commercial and social networks, which now largely exceed the traditional boundaries of (Western) art worlds (Becker, 1982)[5]. As many sociologists have written (Bernier and Perrault, 1985; Fournier, 1986; Bellavance, 1992; and Nicolas-Le Strat, 1997), today artistic identity cannot be defined by a list of criteria, while practice does not define itself by a singular activity done by a singular person. Rather artistic identity is multiple on several levels: a way of life, part of an intricate network, not only of people but also of practices where frontiers are constantly breached or moved (Nicolas-Le Strat, 1997; Bernier and Perrault, 1986). Nicolas-Le Strat (1997) emphasises that artistic activity is just like any other social enterprise, just as arbitrary or relative, and is a matter of social conventions, neither more nor less independent from economic and political forces than other domains. Furthermore, this author emphasises the need to re-orient research away from a focus solely on the artists as contextualized and socialised individuals who are struggling with their environment to an approach where the context is taken as constitutive of an artistic activity[6]. Although appreciative of Nicolas-Le Strat's approach, in this thesis it is clear that what artists say and do is central, but the emphasis remains on the space they construct, which necessarily encompasses the

[4] Although Anderson used the concept of 'imagined community' when theorizing on nationalism, the Western art world seems to incorporate its own brand of essentialism advocated by its "fundamentalists".
[5] The 'art world' as proposed by Becker's symbolic interactionism (1982) imply universes of cooperation, interaction and coordination structured around conventions, and which include not only artists but also institutions with all their 'gate-keepers' or intermediaries, such as art gallery dealers, collectors, critics, art historians, etc. Within this interactionism the art world can be many and its boundaries are permeable, allowing the constant re-definitions of who is/isn't an artist or what is/isn't art. Furthermore, art is dependent on the external world and thus cannot be simply an autonomous and self-referential sphere, where artists are immune to a political and economical reality. Although many critics would argue, and especially artists as well, for an autonomous role for the artist, one located outside political and especially economic reality; it seems it is impossible. Culture remains a domain of contest, where identities are created and re-created in a play of legitimation.

context.

Artistic identity is one of the many identities of an individual, but it has become clear that this component of an individual remains indivisible from life. Life/art practice and identity are multidimensional and multiple. Several authors tried to delimit or define "the artist", and from this emerges a construction which is quite particular, not very stable, but multiple, and one which is less legal or institutional than anthropological and historical (Bellavance, 1992). Both Bernier and Perrault (1985) and Fournier (1986) manage to delimit and schematise the boundaries of the multidimensional field of artistic practice, as does Becker (1982), although in a different manner, in his typology of artists. It must be noted that some time passed since their studies and today's period is characterised by an age of diffused creativity (Nicolas-Le Strat, 1997), exemplified by the "massification" of the worlds of art, which is certainly a sign of the democratisation of knowledge(s)[7].

Furthermore this diffused creativity is also exemplified by a "hybridity" of artistic practices; "l'impact de la creativité diffuse se faire sentir sous la forme d'une banalisation des procédés et des opportunités d'appariement des activités" (*ibid*: 14). Thus, the multiplicity observed then in artistic practices has become even more multidimensional today (see Appendix 1, Figure 1.a. for the model by Bernier and Perrault). For example, the rapidly expanding field of multimedia has allowed artists to enter spaces that did not

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[6] This context includes, "la réputation, la certification intersubjective des compétences, le recours à des métiers appariés, ...en fait tout ce (qui peut être qualifié) de rente ou de prtefeuille assurentiel..." Nicolas-Le Strat, 1997: 36).

previously exist. This has also further multiplied the strategies artists have for gaining legitimacy, while allowing the legitimacy of an autonomous art world and the 'traditional' artist to be contested.

Bernier and Perrault (1985) specify that all these spaces or dimensions within which artists navigate and work out their life strategies have porous borders. The field of artistic practice is at the centre of this worldview, and attracts as well as pushes away the other related fields of practice, overlapping and intersecting them.

The authors add another bi-axial dimension to this field, where each 'border' field acquires a particular place in the overall scheme when it is situated at one of the poles of these two axes (Appendix 1; Figure 1.b.). They specify that one must 'enter' this plan from the top (the private sphere), which places it earlier temporally and logically. Thus, they look at different artistic identities, each in opposition to the other, along the two axes, such as the professional/amateur artist and independent/commercial artist along the private/public axis; and at artist/artisan and artist/theoretician along the manual/intellectual axis. We can also cite Bellavance (1992: 17),

> L'artiste est en fin de compte la résultante de cette négociation/confrontation permanente. L'idéal ou l'enjeu, la combinaison gagnante serait, pour ainsi dire, d'articuler un savoir faire à un savoir-dire pourvu d'un affect singulièrement social: de viser en quelque sorte au centre d'une cible (objet-dard disait Duchamp) constituée par les tensions entre privé et public (ou intimité et publicité) d'une part, savoir-faire et savoir-dire d'autre part, trouver ni plus ni moins quelque chose qui serait à la fois savant mais populaire, intime mais public.

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[7] Universities, medicine, engineering, etc also underwent this type of "massification", which takes the form of professionalisation of each domain requiring new conventions (i.e. a mass activity, diffused qualities,

Through these schemas, Bernier and Perrault (1985) arrive at a definition of the artistic identit(ies), which goes beyond the sole self-naming of artists. In their words, "n'est pas artiste qui prétend l'être, mais uniquement celui qui en a la pratique" (*ibid*: 224). Furthermore artistic practice can differentiate itself into three 'definitions': "art as necessity", "art as profession" and "art as career". These dimensions of the artistic identity eventually become integrated into an overall "ethos", where the artist's freedom or autonomy[8] "se transforme en éthique de travail et en responsabilité sociale" (*ibid*: 499) (see Appendix 1; Figure 2). In fact, part of the author's conclusions, which is most relevant to this research, is that the primary 'definition' of an artist's identity rests on the initial realisation of "art as necessity", which can be then understood as a life-style where all the adaptive factors of the artist to his environment are integrated. In this way, among others, artistic practice takes on an anthropological character.

This anthropological character of the activity and its view as a life-style can be expounded further. The multiple character of artistic activity is its ability for mixing various practices (and people): a network-in-becoming[9]. Nicolas-Le Strat (1997: 33) wrote, "l'activité artistique est le mode par excellence de l'entrelac, de l'alliage, et de la prorogation". The artist function on a cumulative mode of information, networks, contacts which has no value unless it is (re)actualised, verified, utilised. Yet this

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and generalized competencies) (Nicolas-Le Strat, 1997).

[8] This period of diffused creativity liberated the artist as much as it constrained him. However, there are differences of degree of autonomy from artist to artist. On one hand this problem is related to the exploitation of the producer by the diffuser (or of the offer by the demand), and to the autonomy of art. On the other, the problem of autonomy, is one of the degree and the modality of autonomy to concede to the artist and to art, and inversely one of heteronomy to be considered in art and in the artist (Bellavance, 1992). Autonomy and constraint are related to the multiplicity of the artistic practice, and its diffused character.

cumulative and web-like character of artistic practice is not definite or bounded.

Likewise, Nicolas-Le Strat notes the abolished duality between life and art found in artistic practice, a duality usually accepted when work due to its conventional structure is kept separate from life, which is not the case with art. Artistic practice operates on different modalities than most types of work mainly because of its almost total integration of space and time within one dimension. The time and space of art as work is the same as the time and space of art as life. Artistic practice invades life. An artist's studio will usually be his apartment and an artist never really stops working as his thought invade him literally at any time of day or night. Berger and Luckmann (1967) mention that one of the problems, for example, for artists, is to interpret the simultaneity of everyday life with the reality enclaves of which they are part. The existence of this continuum in the life/art practice of an individual perhaps would allow artists to be more sensitive to a notion of trans-cultural space, as we shall see.

2.2 Art in Montreal

Although the Montreal art scene has been very vibrant in the last twenty years (as can attest to it the number of written material such as catalogues, critiques in art journals and newspapers), no synthesising view of art from a historical, sociological or

[9] This idea of an open-ended network can be linked to a formulation by Bernier and Perrault (1985), "l'oeuvre à faire". However, this formulation is much more restrained and limited.

anthropological point of view has been written (yet). In this section, although modestly, I will try to stitch together several aspects of the socio-cultural context of Montreal[10].

By North American standards, Montreal is a middle-sized urban city, which physically resembles many found in North America, yet is considered as being somehow different. Perhaps it is its francophone or its European character found in the Old Port; or perhaps it is its identification as the site of so many international events such as Expo 67, the Olympic Games of 1976, and now the string of summer festivals, such as the International Jazz Festival, Francopholie, the World Film Festival, or even the International Festival of Film on Art. Whatever the reasons, Montreal can be considered as the most culturally, ethnically and linguistically, diversified (from a traditional anthropological point of view) middle sized metropole in North America, with a population of almost two million just on Montreal Island alone (the CUM[11]), of which almost 25% are immigrant and 10% anglophone[12]. This condition of diversity, plurality, multiplicity makes the city quite attractive for artists on a cultural level, and is the reason it is constituted as a microcosm, where social and political ambiguities can be played

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[10] It is important to mention that the history of the Montreal art world, inevitably tied to the history of Quebec and Canada and to the particular oppositional relationships this has engendered, is very complex and out of the scope of this thesis, although particular aspects will be mentioned.

[11] CUM stands for *Communauté Urbaine de Montréal*

[12] This figure for the immigrant population in Montreal represents almost ninety percent of all the immigrant population found in the province of Québec. Yet, these statistics remain problematic, since the very division along linguistic lines imposes an identity, thus usually the term 'allophone' comes to signify and replace the tem 'immigrant'. Not all allophones are immigrants, since an allophone can very well represent the child of immigrants established here for many years. Furthermore, when it comes to statistics, which try to determine the population of visual artists, statistics fail us even more, since the governmental definition of 'visual artist' tends to be very restrictive and rigid excluding many 'honest' artists. This seems like another reflection of the failure of a rational approach at seizing the 'facts'.

out[13]. Additionally, to give an idea, out of the three thousand or so visual artists working and living in Quebec in 1997, almost fifteen percent did not have French or English as their mother language. However, due to the impossibility of defining the category "artist", it is almost impossible to know what the 'real' figures are. Also it is of note that there was a noticed influx of people from other parts of the world in the 70's and 80's, a time when there was cultural development in the post-Tranquil Revolution Quebec (post-*Refus Global* and post-referendum), and when debates surrounding Quebecois/Montreal/regional identities were very loud (whether pro- or anti-)[14].

What is known is that Montreal is still considered by many as Canada's, and especially Quebec's, (multi)cultural center (in all of its meanings), although not its economic centre[15]. In Montreal, its lively 'official' and 'parallel' art scenes inevitably

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[13] This number enlarges to about three millions when it includes all the sprawling suburbs surrounding the Island.

[14] These are complex issues. Briefly, considered one of the crucial moments of the history of Quebec (not only its art history) was the year 1948. This was the year when artists, workers (the Asbestos strikes), and intellectuals (*Cité libre*, 1950) open the doors for a social and cultural "revolution". This is the year of the signing of the *Refus Global*, a manifesto written by mostly young visual artists denouncing the dominant position of the clergy in Quebec and the rigidity of Quebec society. The "Tranquil revolution" can be characterized by the period between the sixties and the first part of the seventies when there were rapid infra-structural changes which brought down the monolithic ideology of a clergy dominated Quebec represented as agricultural, unanimously catholic, and messianic. Some of these structural changes include the institutionalization of art (opening of art departments in universities; opening of museums; creation of a provincial arts council). It is also at this time that develops a duality between a pronounced intervention of the state in affairs of art and culture (the most important being the control of grants to artists and organizations and the politicization of art), and the development of a 'parallel' oppositional art world, constituted of galleries and tightly knight artist associations (Durand, 1997). Also in the sixties, as writes Bellavance (1999a: 9), "le nouvelles idéologies de la décolonisation conduisent à poser la question de la spécificité de l'art québécois, - et non plus canadien ou canadien français -, en relation aux luttes anti-impérialistes qui agitent alors la planète". Right after this period, another ideological position, multiculturalism, will become established as the official policy of the federal government, to many commentators seen as a direct reaction to Quebec's separatism. Today, Borduas, the principal writer of the manifesto, is still considered the 'founding father' of a (culturally) contemporary Quebec; the manifesto remains the socio-artistic foundation of the Quebecois avantgarde, and an inspiration for many Quebecois artists; and the 'parallel' galleries have become legitimated. All of the Quebecois artists interviewed belong to the 'aesthetic generation' of the 'parallel' galleries.

[15] It was considered Canada's metropole until WWII. The laurel seems to have been stolen, in an unending symbolic battle, by Toronto.

inter-(re)act with each other, presenting a prominence of contemporary art forms. Just one look at the local 'cultural' papers or various 'gallery billboards', and one is fast overwhelmed by the amount of visual art exhibitions found on the Island: whether in the commercial galleries, artist run centres, university galleries (associated with Faculties of Fine Arts), art museums, *Maisons de la Culture*, or the present 'parallel' art venues such as the large number of coffee shops, restaurants, and other public areas (some abandoned)[16].

From this it is easy to admit that Montreal does have an art scene and a vibrant one at that, at least from a local point of view and an artist's point of view, even though many critics have noted also that Montreal's art world(s) tends to be closed to new and upcoming artists, and lacks a serious art market. In addition, Montreal is often seen as a city at the intersection of the two dominant world art centres, New York and Paris, which has driven it to promote a certain 'international' and 'contemporary' form of visual arts[17]. Montreal's quest for consecration as an international art centre has culminated in the inauguration of the (small and now much criticised) Biennial of Montreal in 1998.

Looking back, Bellavance (1999a: 7) poses the question whether the mid-seventies period signified the time when

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[16] We would contend that artist-run centres do not constitute anymore the true 'parallel' art scene since they have been largely been institutionalised and thus, legitimated by the government. However, they remain centres of contemporary art, largely contested in the public's eyes, and thus, perhaps not legitimated by the greater public. Also they remain centres of research in art, usually connected with the university networks.

[17] This contemporary esthetic issued from the already talked about Western art world can literally be found around the globe (as seen in the recently increased stock of Biennials or Triennials, such as the Johannesburg Biennial, the San Jose Biennial, the Havana Biennial, etc). Does this represent a new cultural hegemony in visual arts? What is clear is that even if the superficial structure of all of these

> l'affrontement local entre deux formes de nationalisme, l'un canadien, l'autre québécois, va construire le projet d'assurer, d'un côté, la présence des grands courants internationaux sur la scène locale (et nationale), et de l'autre, celle des productions locales (canadiennes, québécoises et/ou montréalaises).

Thus, the discourse on national identity left space for a discourse on the urban identity and regional identity of Quebec. Based on Francine Couture's work which examined the collective art shows presented in several Montreal art centres from 1970-1990, Bellavance remarks that the consequence of this situation was a centring of Quebec's art world in Montreal and at the same time an internationalisation of it, a strategy for it to insert itself into an international space at a time when there was also a "metropolization" of art world(s). For this author, any particularity of Montreal's art will have less to do with the content of the artworks and much more with the different networks (local, national, international) through which this work will be realised, diffused, interpreted, consumed, appropriated. Thus, the montrealization of contemporary art *through* the city itself gives access to an international culture, and it is the nature of these networks that seems to be determining. In this light, it appears that Montreal has the capacity of being simultaneously local and global in terms of the space it occupies in the art world. Perhaps this would support Francine Couture's conception that the 'territory of art' is transnational.

It is in this context that the transcultural/translocal notions of space and identity become even more pertinent in relation to the perceptions of visual artists whether immigrant or Quebecois *de souche* who try to define their socio-political and artistic

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Biennials remains the same, the 'content' of the artistic practices varies greatly, giving hope that there exist alternate 'world views'.

identity while living and working in Montreal. How do these artists manipulate culture to their ends and negotiate the space(s) they find themselves in?

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter will give some details about the research methods used in this qualitative study of an exploratory type. The first part will look briefly at the interviewing process and life histories as an investigative tool. The second section will look at the sample. The third and fourth sections will look at the analysis and the limitations of the study respectively. The final section will provide the reader with a portrait of the artists interviewed.

3.1 The interview

The method of semi-directed interviews with key informants was used in order to collect the life stories of the artists. A semi-directed interview was used in this research as the interview of choice since it gives enough flexibility for the conversation to flow, while at the same time allowed the interviewer to make use of an 'interview guide' (see Appendix 2). In a situation where the research is limited in time and the respondents are professional and highly educated people who are used to an efficient use of their time, a semi-directed interview, as writes Russell Bernard (1988), "demonstrates that you are fully in control of what you want from an interview but leaves both you and your informant free to follow new leads". The artists appreciated this type of interview format.

Each interview lasted anywhere from 60 to 120 minutes, and a tape-recorder was used. No artist presented an objection to the use of the recorder, although perhaps it disrupted the flow of the interview whenever the tape had to be changed. However this technique proved to be very useful, along with notes taken, because of the rapidity of the conversation and the amount of information being given to the researcher. All interviews except one took place in the

studio/house of the artist at different times since all respondents indicated their personal time-constraints, and all except one were carried out in French; the exception being in English. However, all artists spoke French and all understood English. Also, if there was a need to clarify certain points, a second interview was scheduled, this time lasting 30 to 60 minutes. All interviews were subsequently transcribed. All in all, the semi-structured interviews brought to light certain aspects of the life histories of the artists.

Different approaches to life histories have been used and criticised in anthropological and sociological studies for some time now[1]. However, in general, life histories as a qualitative tool of investigation allow to understand from the inside the life processes to be studied (Bertaux, 1980; Cruikshank, 1990). This brings forth what Balandier said in the preface to the work of Ferrarotti (1983), that "l'objectif est d'accéder par l'intérieur à une réalité qui dépasse le narrateur et la façonne. Il s'agit de saisir le vécu social, le sujet dans ses pratiques, dans les manières qu'il négocie les conditions sociales qui lui sont particulières". One important aspect is that it is a flexible tool, since it allows the researcher to take a general problem as a departure point, and to centre on several segments of life. This allows the respondents to elaborate on particular themes, as was done in this case. This is in contrast to unique life histories. The life histories collected here then do not pretend to be complete. Rather they are centred on themes pertinent to the exploration of notions of trans-cultural space and culture (re)production, and specifically on artistic practice as lived, since as seen in Chapter 2 artistic practice is intrinsically tied to 'life-in-general' or lifestyle. It is the social reality as constructed by the artists that needed to be revealed.

[1] Unfortunately there is no real agreement in the way the writing and the transcription of such stories must be accomplished. Much of recent anthropology has dealt with issues of reflexivity concerning the field, the relationship of the anthropologist and the informant, as well as questions of representation and generalisation of the data collected (e.g. Clifford, 1988, 1986; Marcus and Fisher, 1986; Pratt, 1986).

3.2 The sample

For this study ten visual artists, as situated, "complex, historical subjects, neither cultural *types* nor unique individuals" (Clifford, 1997), were chosen. Six of these artists have emigrated between 1977 and 1994, and four are of Quebecois (francophone) background[2], all from the *Régions*[3], having moved to Montreal between 1985 and 1989. Of the six immigrant artists, three are women and three are men, and of the four Quebecois artists, two are women and two are men. Presently, they all live and work on Montreal Island. Almost all of the artists come from a middle class background.

The author is aware of the problem in classifying the artists as "immigrant" and "Quebecois", especially since it reproduces the 'essentializing' boundaries usually found in this type of rational academic discourse, and since these artists refuse to adopt standard social categories such as 'immigrant' or 'ethnic'. However, the purpose of such an *a priori* classification is simply to be able to compare two groups, who are nonetheless complex and diversified. The justification in such a classification is the condition that binds together the 'immigrant group', which is the fact of emigration, that is leaving one place (of origin or of another emigration) to end up in another place, in this case, Montreal; and the condition that binds both groups together, which is the very fact they are all artists living and working in Montreal.

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[2] Time permitting, considering the political situation in Quebec it would have been interesting to have interviewed a number of Quebecois anglophone artists as well. All francophones were thus chosen to keep a certain 'consistency' in the research.

[3] The *Régions* means the (rural) areas outside of Montreal. In Quebec however, since approximately the sixties, a duality established itself between the urban, 'cosmopolitanism' of Montreal and the rural, 'provincialism' of the *Régions* usually associated with provincialism; a duality which was manifested especially in the representations made by artists. This was a time for searching a truly popular art, perhaps even populist (Bellavance, 1999a). The rhetoric regional (national)/contemporary (international) still surfaces from time to time in the Quebecois art worlds, however, it is not as visible since now many of the *Régions* support 'recognised' international symposia or artistic events. Much of the discourse and rhetoric generated by these two opposing sides, was inevitably played out not only by artists or art critics themselves, but also by the government, who held (and holds) the strings of the art funding purse.

There were two main problems in selecting the respondents. One of these was the definition of 'artist', which is still being debated not only by various commentators of, but by artists themselves. Thus, I have opted for an open definition where, 'artist' is one who not only defines oneself as artist, but who also demonstrates a deep engagement towards their practice (for example, through a sustained production of artwork and/or a public display of their work), and who may have been recognised by his/her peers (and/or critics)[4]. Secondly, as indicated in Chapter 2, there is a large number of artists in Montreal, and Montreal's art world is quite fragmented. Thus, because of my prior knowledge of the art scene, five of the artists were found by researching galleries or exposition catalogues of the last five years. Other contacts with artists resulted from a 'snowball' effect', where someone acquainted with my research referred an artist, as was the case with Dr. Bellavance (INRS-Culture et Société) who referred two artists, and another acquaintance referred one. Contacting various Montreal art galleries or art centres proved fruitless, as they were reluctant in giving names of artists they had under their wing or simply refused to categorise the artists as immigrant/Quebecois. All of these artists inscribe themselves in a contemporary practice of art, usually one that allies various mediums and disciplines. Also all artists were contacted by telephone prior to the actual interview, at which time the general aims of the study were presented, and a few initial questions about their artistic practice were asked (e.g. number of years practising, number of years in Montreal, type of medium, art shows). A more detailed portrait of the artists is given in the last section of this chapter.

[4] Many authors (e.g. Nicolas-Le Strat, 1998; Fournier, 1986; Bernier and Perrault, 1985) point out the difficulty in defining who is/isn't an artist. Thus, it must be mentioned that being an artist does not necessarily mean to spend most of your time "producing" works, or to live from you work, or even to regularly expose your work, or to be recognized by your peers. The definitions of professional artist by sociologists and certainly by administrative or governmental agencies (e.g. the different-level arts council) are too restrictive to include many 'real' artists.

3.3 Analysis

The analysis of the large amount of descriptive data obtained during the interviews constitutes one of the crucial phases of the research process, since it is the responsibility of the researcher to choose, to select what is relevant in the perceptions, in the words of those who speak. What may seem enlightening to one researcher, perhaps, will not seem so to another. Nonetheless, aware of the limitations, I opted for a thematic analysis, which focuses on identifiable themes and ways of living, basing myself on certain authors such as Bertaux 1980; Clapier-Valladon, 1983, Huberman and Miles, 1991. The interview guide used in the study initially was to be divided into two parts, one considering the life trajectory as it pertained to the (e/im)migration to Montreal and the other, considering their artistic/cultural practices. It was clear, however, after the initial interviews and the supporting literature, that such a clear division was not possible. It is how the respondents experience this combination life/art that was significant in the final analysis. The themes analysed, which intersected and overlapped included: a) Personal information; b) History of (e/im)migration; c) (Relationship to/with) the place of origin; d) Movement; e) History of artistic practice; f) Artistic practice in the present (discourse/practice); g) Relationship to Montreal; h) Networks (social, artistic, economic, political).

3.4 Limitations

The sample is limited for several reasons: (1) the time period allocated for this study was simply too short to include more artists, especially since some artists had to cancel previously arranged meetings at the last minute, which necessitated a re-scheduling of the interview or an outright re-selection of artists; (2) a difficulty in finding "immigrant" artists, especially in

galleries or art associations; (3) a disinterest by many artists in participating in an anthropological study, since as artist indicated it equates "être forcée à avaler la pilule du vécu"; (4) since French was a second language for all of the immigrant artists, some had problems in communicating their ideas. Furthermore, what is important is to accept that the aim of this study is qualitative, thus statistical representation was not its aim as such, but rather the exploratory comparison of particular themes in the discourse and life experience of two groups of artists as they evolve in a particular socio-historical context.

Chapter 4 Portrait of the Respondents

The next few tables present a general portrait of the artists interviewed, especially stressing differences (and also similarities) between immigrant and Quebecois artists.

Table 4.1 Distribution of immigrant (I) and Quebecois (Q) artists based on type of artistic activity/medium

Main activity/Medium	Female (I)	Female (Q)	Male (I)	Male (Q)
Painting	1	0	1	0
Sculpture	0	1	3	1
Printing	2	0	0	0
Video or Installation	0	1	1	1
Multidisciplinary	3	2	5	2
Total	**3**	**2**	**5**	**2**

From Table 4.1 we can see that although each artist has one dominant artistic medium or discipline, which can describe his/her overall artistic activity, all artists inscribed themselves nonetheless in a contemporary and *multidisciplinary* practice.

Table 4.2 Distribution of immigrant and Quebecois artists based on age

Age	# of Immigrant	# of Quebecois
20-30	0	0
31-40	3	2
41-50	3	2
51-60	2	0
Total	**8**	**4**

Table 4.2 reveals that all the artists interviewed (except two) belong to the same artistic generation (between 31 and 50 years)[1]. The other two artists are a little bit older, but only by a few years.

[1] Choosing artists who belong to approximately the same generation as well as a similar time line in artistic education allows to situate them in a similar socio-historical context, since it means they could be influenced by certain common socio-economical and political, or ideological factors. Artistically, it can situate them in a similar esthetic generation (Fournier, 1986).

Table 4.3 Distribution of immigrant artists based on place of origin and gender

Gender	Place of origin	Number of participants
F	Eastern/Central Europe (Poland, Bulgaria)	2
F	Middle East (Lebanon) (*)	1
Total Female (I)	--------	**3**
M	Eastern/Central Europe (Romania)	1
M	North of Africa (Morocco, Algeria)	2
M	Middle East (Lebanon)	1
M	Central America (Mexico)	1
Total Male (I)	--------	**5**
Total (I)	--------	**8**

(*) One of the women immigrant artists, although she lived much of her life in Lebanon, is of Armenian origin.

As Table 4.3 demonstrates the immigrant artists come from various areas of the world. However, it must be remembered that it was not within the scope of this thesis to seek a 'global' representation

Table 4.4 Distribution of immigrant artists based on the number of years since their immigration to Quebec

Length of stay	Number
< 5 years	2
6 – 10 years	3
11 – 20 years	3
> 20 years	0
Total	**8**

Table 4.4 shows that six of the immigrant artists have been in Montreal for more than six years. Only two were here four years. Also, four of the five male immigrant artists came here with their spouses or partners. One came with his family. On the other hand, two of the three women immigrant artists came alone, one marrying here. The third one came with her husband and child. Furthermore, three of the immigrant artists

resided somewhere else than Canada for a number of years before settling in Montreal. Thus, one stayed in New York for two years; another one in Rome for thirteen years, and another had stayed between three and five years each in London, Switzerland, Morocco, and Greece. Also, two stayed for a length of time in a Canadian city other than Montreal before finally settling in Montreal. One stayed in Saint John, Newfoundland for two years, and the other in Saint Hyacinthe for approximately one year and a half. The Quebecois artists, on the other hand, all come from '*les Régions*', outside of Montreal, and have been here more than ten years, usually in association with their art education in Montreal.

Table 4.5 Distribution of immigrant and Quebecois artists based on type of education received

Type of education	**Immigrant**	**Quebecois**
Specialised studies in art (e.g. B.F.A) only	3	0
With graduate studies or internships in art	4	4
Self-taught in art	1	0
Total	**8**	**4**

From Table 4.5 it is clear that all artists except one had a specialised and advanced education in visual arts, pursuing their graduate degrees at the Master's level, or participating in various residencies and internships. However, a difference must be pointed out. Thus, although all Quebecois artists obtained their Master's education in Montreal, none of the immigrant artists pursued a M.F.A. (Master's of Fine Arts), since graduate studies in art were usually implied in the art education they obtained abroad, which consisted of 5 to 8 years of education in a specialised school or Academy (as opposed to the university which is typical of the art education here). Furthermore, two of the immigrant artists did obtain a Master's degree in related disciplines (Museology and Art History) in Montreal. Also, two of the immigrant artists, one of whom is self-taught

in visual arts, had professional studies in non art-related disciplines (veterinary medicine and accounting) before pursuing their art studies.

Table 4.6 Distribution of immigrant and Quebecois artists based on artistic experience

Experience	Immigrant	Quebecois
< 10 years	2	0
11 – 20 years	3	3
> 20 years	3	1
Total	**8**	**4**

Table 4.6 shows that half of the artists interviewed said they have been practising their art between 11 and 20 years, which usually included the years of their art training. All had had at least one solo exhibition (and a number of collective art shows, both here and abroad). However, from the number and places of art shows, the immigrant artists saw themselves being refused shows in Montreal, in what are considered important contemporary art galleries. Also eight of the artists are considered in 'mid-career' by the art *milieu*.

Finally, Table 4.7 points out that most of the artists have an alternate source of revenue that will allow them to pursue their artistic practice, half of which work in an art-related field. However, the artists did not consider the sale of artwork as primarily aimed at revenue generation, but rather as an ideal.

Table 4.7 Distribution of immigrant and Quebecois artists based on their principal source of revenue

Principal source of revenue	**Immigrant**	**Quebecois**
Sale of art work	0	0
Employment in art-related field	4	3
Work not linked to art	1	0
Spouse	1	0
Social assistance	0	0
Unknown	2	1
Total	**8**	**4**

In Chapter 5 I present the results of the thematic analysis of the discourse artists had on their life/artistic practice. More specifically, the next chapter will look at the perception of visual artists in relation to their artistic/life practice and a transcultural notion of space and identity.

Chapter 5 Of Place(s) and Space(s)

Je est un autre – Rimbaud

La vie est un voyage – Proust

The analysis of the collected information brings forth certain particularities about artistic practice and culture production at a time of increased transnational movements in a particular group of artists. This which support my hypothesis that immigrant artists construct their life/art space and their social and artistic identity by being more sensitive to a notion of a transcultural/translocal space. It also supports my second hypothesis, that Quebecois artists, although sharing the space of life/art with immigrant artists, their construction and experience of place differs from that of the immigrant artists. The similarity in the answers might surprise a few readers considering the existence of a strong rhetoric on artistic individualism, artists portrayed as biographies, particular, and unique individuals. However, by no means do I try to generalise my findings to all visual artists who work in Montreal. The relationship art/culture/life and local/place/global/space and how these tie with the notion of boundaries and boundary-making constitute essential elements of my study. However, I must insist on the complex nature of the subject(s), and the exploratory nature of this research, with its minor literary incursions, and thus on its own frontiers of analysis as permeable, blurred, and expandable.

As cited above, "place is practised space" as de Certeau wrote; a space constructed through physicality, repetition, process[1]. Twelve lives: twelve places converging into one. Their realities defined in practice, and practice defining their space, one which can be local and/or global, imagined and/or (f)actual, and which often cuts across various boundaries (national, cultural, class, gender, etc.).

In the following pages I complete the portrait of the twelve participants presented in Chapter 4 by looking at how certain themes, which follow one another, sometimes overlap, cross, and blend with one another, articulate into different places and spaces for the artists, whether immigrant or Quebecois, who are making sense of their lives in Montreal. City, village and place of origin constitute Place 1. The artists' art/life practice and relationship to culture represents Space 1. Their (em/im)migration and relationship with Montreal characterises Place 2, while the networks and travel/movement they are engaged in embody Space 2. In the analysis, it became clear that the boundaries are never absolute between these distinctions of space and place or between the two categories of artists, blurring the lines, intersecting the 'self' and 'other': a dialogue between space and place; 'self' and 'other'. There thus emerges a portrait of the artists' perceptions situated inside a transcultural/translocal space, between the local and the global, where the boundaries between the two groups of artists, are separate yet sometimes become indistinct: an unbound culture in a localized cultural place, Montreal?

[1] The examination of place has a long and venerable history in anthropology, and it would be too long to cite the different approaches; for example, two pioneering figures in urban anthropology are Gans (1962); and Hannerz (e.g.1969, 1980).

5.1 Place 1: City, village, and the place of origin

Four out of the six immigrant artists and all four the Quebecois artists were born and spent their childhood in a small town or village, yet all subsequently spent the majority of their adult lives in large cities, moving there at an early age with their family or moving eventually for their studies. The other five were already from/in a large city. Also, a number of the immigrant artists, before coming to Montreal, lived in more than one large city, usually a city larger than Montreal.

The world today seems like a smaller place, more interconnected, with certain nodal concentrations of populations spread around its surface, moving not only themselves physically but also information across global space. It is not surprising that the large city becomes the converging point for all of these artists. The city (no matter if it is Algiers or Montreal) is the place where they found more freedom(s) (economical/material, political, social, cultural, artistic), but also, as the artists made clear, where they found the structural/institutional and affective support to pursue their artistic interests. As one Quebecois artist exclaimed in relation to his place of origin, a small town near Quebec City, "J'étouffe... c'est le contraire de la liberté, la petite ville!" Hannerz (1996) argues there are four categories of people identifiable with a large (Western style?) city[2], and certainly the cities the immigrant artists came from had the basic infrastructure of any large European city, with its industries, universities, hospitals, public transport, etc. One of these categories is the category of expressive producers,

[2] The other three categories Hannerz mentions are transnational business and the managerial class, the various non-Western populations, usually in low paying jobs in rich Western cities, and tourists. Yet, people may certainly cross boundaries between the categories. The expressive specialists although

which includes artists, who swarm to the large cities not only for their studies but also as a sort of pilgrimage, "being in the right place". This was the case for a number of the immigrant artists who, even though they lived in large cities which already supported a basic structure for visual arts, made the choice to move and live in one of the 'cultural' cities of Europe (such as Paris, London, or Rome). For the Quebecois artists the main accessible 'cultural' centre was Montreal.

For artists in particular, the city is a funnelled, cumulated information nest, whether in its institutional forms (universities, libraries, etc), its meetings and conferences, or its (in)formal networks; a nest of branches of knowledge/reality, available to (almost) anyone who cares to break his shell in it (Nicolas-Le Strat, 1997). The different flows of people, ideas, objects, capital to/from the large cities force us to reconsider the relationship between culture/Culture, place and the people who inhabit this space.

The large city becomes a site of not only transnational capital flows but also of cultural flows, connected not only to smaller cities, in a national territory, but most of all to the other large cities around the world; of course, some are 'world cities' like Paris, London, and New York, still influencing the imaginings of people from all parts of the world, especially when it comes to art. Furthermore, Eurocentric ideas about art and art schooling have been globalized just as ideas about democracy or individualism have. "Here or over there (in other large cities), it's the same thing": echo the words of a

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contributing to the tastes and lifestyle of the 'managerial elites' may find themselves working (most of the time) in the semi/unskilled sectors.

number of artists. Although the relationship between these cities remains an unequal one, the boundaries become blurred, between similar places. Taken in reverse, the difference between a village and a city for some artists seems greater than the difference between two cities in different countries. The perceived difference seems to do more with a certain type of Western 'urban culture' and with the way life is organised in a city than with more 'traditional' cultural differences, which facilitates a certain sensitivity to the notion of transcultural/translocal space. However, the relationship all the immigrant and Quebecois artists maintain with their 'place of origin' should not be abandoned for the trendier conceptions we use to make sense of their 'worldly' interconnectedness.

Much of the 'connection' with the immigrant artists' countries of origin, beside the obvious relationship maintained with family and friends left behind, has to do with filling the painful experience of an 'emptied space' they left in their own cultural and social fabrics, which is translated for at least half of the respondents into not-so-regular visits, to not only see family and friends, but also "voir des couleurs que je ne vois pas ici": to 'resource'[3] oneself, socially, culturally and visually. Translocal space, local place. Some of the immigrant artists have not returned to their roots, for the most part because of continuous unstable political situations in their countries, or simply because for all of them, their economic situation has prevented them from returning or returning regularly. However, most have shown at least once their work in their place of origin (some are recognised there); and all have plans and future projects to return to exhibit there. They also keep informed about what is happening there.

[3] The term 'to resource oneself' seems to be part of the local jargon and simply means to renew oneself. A number of the artists interviewed used this term when they spoke of their travels.

For the Quebecois artists the 'connection' is not only with family and friends who still reside in their regions but with a more important relationship with the art scene. All of the Quebecois artists have exhibited or still show regularly in the region they come from.

Of course, the difference between the two groups is the distance, the (im)possibility of return, as well as the relationships related to family, friends and to art, as we shall see shortly. But before, within the discourse of the artists on their place of origin, something else seems to be present.

In fact, several things mentioned explicitly in the discourse of the artists converge into one (mythical?) place, the place of Origin, the simplicity, the authenticity of a rural "natural", unobstructed life, still real in all of its possibilities. Thus, many of the immigrant artists mentioned a desire to eventually live, outside of the city, in a small village (theirs or others'). Others mentioned the desire to *explore,* to *discover* and to live (for an extended period of time) in other cultures, "other than the North American-style culture", "somewhere where they can learn something new", as one artist mentioned, since, for example, "Poland and North America have basically the same culture". The Quebecois artists in particular expressed a need "to find nature", "to experience nature", "la vraie vie", which they find by returning from time to time to the *Régions*, but which they would like to experience by discovering "other places" also (in and outside of Canada). Also, most of these artists, whether immigrant or Quebecois, mentioned the

necessity of these places as echoes of childhood. Does the Western rhetoric of the "primitive" transpire here, in the Romantic/romanticised visions of a few artists? Seeking the 'other' of the fragmented/fragmenting city, or is it the 'original self'? Thus, the need for residing and *being* in a large city, seems to be in a constant dialogue (or a 'dialectic') with the desire of *being* in the 'village', in 'nature', somewhere where the day-to-day life is not so complicated.

As Miller (1991) points out, the prerogative of modern Western art as a category was to counter and transcend the fragmentation of contemporary life in the industrial era. The "primitive", as a figure of "otherness", embodies origin(ality), simplicity and naturalness in/as totality of a humanity past and for a humanity in the future; opposed to the inauthentic, rational, individualistic, industrial society (Miller, 1991). It embodies a quest for authenticity and a human universal. Although Miller criticises the posture of artists and the Western art world toward the "primitive" advancing the racial and dominant underpinnings of this construction, we cannot assume that immigrant artists have this type of uncritical stance. For most, the 'objective' reality they have is the apparently 'simple'/simplified life style they perceived in the(ir) rural areas; a lifestyle which is to them quite different from the "sterilised rural areas" found in North America and certainly from the chaotic city life (they experience here or elsewhere). Thus, the desire for 'totality' in the life/art practice, of especially immigrant artists, is their reality. Their 'return' to their origins or the 'primitive', is not a necessarily a dominating position, as Miller would have it. Yes, all of the immigrant artists embody a middle-

class, intellectual, urban lifestyle[4], however, most live a socially, economically, politically and culturally precarious situation, struggling to legitimate their art/life practice not only as artists, but also as 'others', in a society that still categorises them along cultural lines. Somewhere there is a need for stability. Perhaps, this attempt at 'totality' is more than part of an artistic, Romantic ideology of authenticity; it is an authenticity of the self and of humanity. As Bernier and Perrault (1985: 499) demonstrated, the schema (seen in Appendix 1; Figure 2) indicates that, "il n'y a pas vraiment de place sociale désignée pour l'art, mais que l'art naît d'une necessité personnelle qui, via l'aménagement quotidien d'un style de vie, se transforme en une *responsabilité sociale*". Perhaps this 'totality' and quest for authenticity stems from their private and public responsibility (which all mentioned as being an essential part of their practice): a strategy to reconcile with their life/art practice the totalising bureaucratic structure of the city (found also in the organisation of the arts)[5], which fragments as it totalises (Herzfeld, 1992), and which certainly infringes on their individual autonomy. Thus, immigrant artists' discourse (much more so than the Quebecois artists) on 'O/origin(s)' is related not only to the importance they attribute to 'traditions' in these places, but also to the perception of artistic practice as universal; one which is perhaps

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[4] Urban modernist attitudes (ideologies?) develop(ed) in relation to rural traditionalist ones. During the 19th c., in many parts of Europe under the call of nationalism, often many intellectuals would adopt a position that often romanticized and reified the rural populations; "our peasants". That is a position of dominance. Perhaps partly these artists, as part of an intellectual urban culture, carry forth this romanticized notion of rural areas.

[5] The Montreal art market is quasi-nonexistent, and thus, artists must principally rely on arts council grants in order to survive. They cannot be self-sufficient as such. The institutionalization of the art world, at least in Canada and Quebec, has created a very bureaucratic domain, where the central axis is formed by the various municipal, provincial and federal arts councils, with the other institutions, such as public galleries extending from them, which manage the funding of the arts through individual grants. Although these may seem like neutral public funding institutions, no bureaucracies are. In fact the arts councils operate on a peer basis, in the sense that the evaluation of the candidates is done with the approval of an artist-formed jury, usually made up of local artists. One can imagine what this means to artists who are proposing their candidatures and do not fit into the categories designated by the arts councils or other public galleries.

able to bridge the gap between the rural, "real life"/"art as life", and the urban culture, "artificial life"/"art beside life". Transcultural/translocal: dialogues across places, across space. The movement does not stop here, as artists try to reconcile art/life practice as one and justify a discourse on the universal in a 'relativized'/'relativizing' world.

5.2 Space 1: art/life practice

The artists implicated in this study, no matter what their cultural background, demonstrated in their discourse that the boundary between artistic practice and life collapses, with art making up the 'dominant' component of their reality. In this way, artistic practice is not only a search for the authentic, it is also a search for identity. There is another tension, or boundary present here. As artists try to reconcile the "art as life" and "life as art" aspect of their lives, they realise that it is not possible to extend this to everyone: "not everyone can be an artist, but yes, everyone can make their life 'artful'". For immigrant artists the 'other' must be everyone outside the art world. Furthermore, whatever autonomy is present in this type of work also reserves its greatest violence, because of the very real economic/material constraints they live with. All the artists confirmed this point during the interviews. This economical constraint can be translated in another collapse of the art/life boundary, since the local time/space boundary also collapses into a global time/space. Thus, for all of the artists, except three, the apartment/house is also the studio, and work will happen there at any time. This collapse of the boundary is clear when the artists relate the tension they feel in managing this situation, especially those who are not living alone. Thus, artistic practice is localized as much as it is globalized: another translocal/transcultural space.

Artistic practice is not only about autonomy (although it is very important aspect mentioned by most of the artists), or individual/particular expression, but also about the universality of the practice, as so many artists mentioned. However, their discourse, especially the Quebecois artists', is wary of an uncritical stance towards the notion of a universal Art. All of the immigrant artists conceive of artistic practice as universal in as much as people around the world are involved in it and can *share* their experiences across boundaries, national, gender, cultural, etc. Thus, indeed, for *all* of these artists, the notion of exchange and discovery is very important: it is a necessity to discover oneself through the discovery of the other. Fundamentally, for these artists, the processes involved in the creation of art are universal. Perhaps the reason all of the immigrant artists embrace the universal aspect of art in their discourse is part of their strategy to become more accepted or "integrated" in the Montreal art world and society in general. When one claims a universality in art, which necessarily embraces one's art also, then rejection is impossible. The Quebecois artists rejected the traditional notion of a univeral art, although some admitted the basis for universality in practice. Thus, even though, as one artist said, "art is contextualized"/localised (a very present discourse in university art departments), it is nonetheless able to travel across boundaries, and be involved in an exchange, not physical but mental. For them, then, the universality is based on exchange: "l'art peut être considéré universel, en autant que l'expression des autres va faire questioner ses propres pratiques. C'est ça le plus important". Art: translocal/transcultural space? Another artist said, "En art il n'a pas de couleurs; pas de langues".

The question should be asked perhaps why most of these artists, although 'culturally' different, share a similar imagined space. I already touched upon the relationship all of these artists have with the metropole. Now, let me briefly mention something about their artistic education. All the immigrant artists did their studies in specialised art schools, while all the Quebecois artists completed their studies in Fine Arts departments in Quebecois universities. Although differences exist in the teaching approach of both, basically they both have their roots in the style of the 19th c. French Academies, which emphasise the history of European and Western art in their teaching. This is as true for the art schools found in Eastern Europe as in places like Algeria and Lebanon. The difference between the Quebecois model and the 'other' models is, perhaps, the 'other' valorises teaching about the 'local' 'traditional' arts (part of a nationalist rhetoric?), which in the West are usually assimilated to the realm of 'folklore' or 'anthropology'. In the university Fine Arts structure, on the other hand the emphasis seems to lie on 'theory' over 'practice', something deplored by all of the immigrant artists. However, it is not to say they reject theory; simply they value practice more. Quebecois artists, who living under the influence of local/national history, do not find as many referents in European artistic tradition as immigrant artists; instead they are more sensitive to the heritage of Borduas, the key figure in Quebecois contemporary art, and to formulations of Quebecois identity through the *Refus Global*. The history of European art is present as something learned in art school but it is distant; assuredly something to be explored eventually.

These observations bring us back to the idea of a shared cultural lifestyle tied to a particular intellectual artistic urban culture, which all of these artists share. It is the same cultural universe (Bellavance, 1997) born out of particular socio-historical conditions in which the idea of 'visual artist' was born, and any differences that exist between the two groups, as we shall see shortly, are related not as much to this discursive and imagined space they share, but rather to the place they live in and the social relations they established there.

5.3 Place 2: Montreal

Certainly we can talk of art practice(s) as contextualised and localised, since for its production it requires a place, and everything (mainly materials, and the economic support) linked to that place for the realisation of the work, as well as for its diffusion it requires the necessary infrastructure (galleries, universities, studios, etc.). For Quebecois artists, who nonetheless have been in Montreal for about as long as most of the immigrant artists, ordering their art/life practices in this 'system' is not problematic, since art is legitimated by the government (provincial and municipal) as well as legitimated in the eyes of a particular public, and their life histories demonstrate the long-term relations they developed with the different institutions, whether art galleries, universities or government agencies (i.e. art councils), as well as different circles of artists. They know how to negotiate and manoeuvre in the system. For immigrant artists, the situation is different. It is not so much the question of living in a large city (since all of them have), but rather it is a question of the context (social, political, and economic) in which art

develops in this city. Thus, the space both groups may share is similar but the place is different.

First of all let me reiterate the point that all of the artists immigrated to Montreal to find a certain autonomy and comfort they did not have before in their place of origin. All of the immigrant artists were attracted by the culturally (in all of its forms) plural aspect of Montreal as well as its francophone nature, which for most signified a relationship with Europe. As well, they had all high expectations of developing their artistic practice here. However, for immigrant artists these expectations were quickly dashed.

All immigrant artists mentioned the overwhelmingly bureaucratic nature of the art world. Overly-institutionalised, with its criteria of selection, which rarely fit the average artist, with its quasi-scientific method of asking for project proposals from the artists, and with its emphasis on contemporary art forms, the Montreal art world easily keeps the immigrant artists outside its boundaries. Moreover, all of the immigrant artists deplore the lack of popular appreciation for the visual arts, blaming the education system. The recurrent mention of 'tradition' and 'history' in Europe and other cultures is telling. Many of these artists call Montreal a provincial town, comfortable, but provincial, outside of the international art circuits.

Furthermore, although many artists mention the positive aspects of diversity (in all aspects of life) in Montreal, they find Montreal to be a "ville virtuelle", or a "ville

dortoire". On one hand it is completely destabilising, as people from all over the world and architecturally eclectic buildings change constantly from one day to the next. On the other hand Montreal is also too structured, with its unending bureaucratic conundrums and linear streets, its conventions and its "lack of spontaneity". However, for the immigrant artists Montreal represents also a place of autonomy despite these disadvantages, where they can study and exercise their art without the constraints they encountered in their respective countries. As one artist said, "D'abord Montreal c'est un espace de liberté. Loin de ses références, c'est un espace où je peux mieux me réflechir, me repenser".

Furthermore, for both Quebecois and immigrant artists, Montreal seems to be a bridge toward other art centres, either in the United States or in Europe. One artist said, "(Montréal) c'est un centre... tout y converge et tout va vers l'extérieur". And another artist mentioned,

> As a visual artist Montreal is a very small city for the visual arts compared to other cities. It's very small. What is here that is special in Montreal? It's a city I would say where I had the opportunity to study a lot. It's a city that has an ease ...an access to the European world and the (North American) ...well it's a cliché but well it's just in the infrastructure... it's true, it's just in the libraries, in the infrastructure that you have this kind of access, so it creates a situation that there is two types of tendencies in Montreal that make it that it's possible to be open to two Western (Occidental) worlds.

Most artists find Montreal a closed market for the arts and thus find it necessary to leave Montreal in order to show their work elsewhere, something also mentioned by Bellavance (1999a).

Furthermore, most of the immigrant artists mention the ambiguous position in which they find themselves, advantageous on one hand and disadvantageous on another. Transcultural/translocal: the boundaries are breached. They all see their 'double identity" position as being advantageous, since they can bring two points of view: "with my cultural background, I gain here a new background and I gain something unique: a vision from two points of view which I can then share with others." The following statement echoes the perception of many of the artists for whom Montreal is now "home":

> (...) au fur et à mesure du temps que je suis ici je m'enracine et j'appartiens à cette société, partiellement, progressivement. Et en retournant au Maroc, je réalise que j'ai acquis une autre identité progressivement et que je suis différent de l'environment.

But on the other hand as another artist mentions, "On devient de nulle part quand on émigre". A statement which certainly translates all of the frustrations most of the immigrant artists go trough as they construct their lives here. This perception of rejection in the art world[6] and in society in general seems mostly due to the translocal/transcultural space they inhabit here, and the localising and totalising effects of bureaucracies, as they classify and name what remains unbound and unclassifiable, preventing these individuals from finding legitimation as artists who bring a different world view with them. The government objectifies culture, all forms of culture, in order to manage and appropriate the diversity within its boundaries. This is even more problematised when enter the parallel and confrontational federal politics of multiculturalism and provincial interculturalism[7].

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[6] All artists find themselves disadvantaged because of the very precariousness of the artist's status, but immigrant artists seem doubly disadvantaged, as artists and as 'cultural others'.

[7] Both Hamilton (1996) and Li (1992) wrote of the differential cultural policies established under by Heritage Canada under the policy of multiculturalism and by the Arts Council of Canada, where it appears that immigrant artists are kept in a category which would define their activity as cultural expression but not art. It would appear Quebec does the same thing, as an 'entity' that wants to export itself as a nation, especially through its cultural products, visual arts included (which has been a common practice of nations

Immigrant artists certainly refuse to be ghettoised or classified as Polish artist, Algerian artist. In relation to this almost all do not keep in touch with their 'diasporic' communities, since they consider them as ghettos, and find that these communities do not understand what they do anyway, so they prefer not to be involved in their activities.

Thus, immigrant artists consider themselves first of all as artists (not as immigrant or Polish or Moroccan, etc), sharing the same 'artistic space' as Quebecois artists; they consider themselves on par with Quebecois artists. They do not play identity politics here. Their position remains deliberately ambiguous, not only for the government but also perhaps for many people in the different 'bounded' communities who have taken on a play of identity politics as they try to legitimate their positions in Montreal. Immigrant artists want to legitimate their position mainly as artists, advocating a certain humanism and universality, and since they do not publicise their 'cultural identity', they remain unclassifiable, strangers: in this respect they inhabit a transcultural/translocal space of art/life, since space in art is local and global as is the universal view of art, that most artists hold. They consistently find themselves further away on the margins of the Montreal art world than their Quebecois counterparts. Yet realising their disadvantaged

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who use signs and symbols, as marks of difference from other nations). However, perhaps what is important is that Quebec has established interculturalism as its policy for 'managing culture' to distinguish itself from the federalist multiculturalism. Furthermore, Quebec also ha its provincial arts council. Another point is that obviously questions in art have a lot to do with representation (of whom? of what? for who?). These are complex issues and cannot be expanded on here, however, it may be problematic for an individual who is an artist and happens to be an immigrant in Montreal, to be caught in something that is beyond his immediate control, that is 'games of representation' that are being played out between one entity, Canada, and another entity, Quebec. The case in point is in 1996, Sheila Copps (Minister of Heritage Canada at the time) announcing a few months after the Referendum, the encouragement for and the promotion of artists who make 'Canadian art'. What does this really mean? Without surprise, artists all over Canada were outraged. Art as part of culture is an arena of contest inside which artists are caught by the artwork they make.

position, they look toward the advantage they offer as individuals who can see from two (or more) points of view, and who can share this vision with the local public.

However, despite these disadvantages tied to Montreal, Montreal remains a "point d'attache" for all of these artists. None of the artists interviewed played the victim. They all realised that Montreal is a comfortable "home base", into which they extend their already established networks, in which they create new ones and from which they subsequently extend them to somewhere else. It is perhaps "home"; some form of stability, for now, but not a static home, rather a bridge toward other places and spaces.

5.4 Space 2: Networks and Movement (Travel)

It has become clear as this research advanced, that the most important aspect of artistic practice must be the networks an artist establishes between the various places he shares, with galleries, with other artists, with institutions, with family, with friends, etc, in Montreal and elsewhere. This realisation is most salient as we examine the perceptions of immigrant artists whose greatest difficulty was in establishing these networks in the Montreal art world. It is worth citing Nicolas-Le Strat on the nature of the artistic networks and their connection to other social spheres, in a dynamic process, where art blends with life:

> L'activité n'est viable socialement et personnellement que lorqu'elle se réalise à l'échelle de la vie dans son ensemble, dès lors que les relations personnelles côtoient les relations de travail, voir fusionnent avec elles, à partir du moment où la socialité de vie se calque sur la socialité de travail. L'activité profesionnelle exige une densité si forte des relations (connaître, rencontrer, coopérer, s'affilier...) qu'elle assimile nécessairement les dimensions affectives. Elle empiète sur la vie personnelle par necessité (la coopération) mais surtout par nature (le

> relationnel). La socialité professionnelle est une socialité de vie le partage, la rencontre, la confrontation... (p.122)

As mentioned before all of the immigrant artists found it very difficult in starting their artistic practice over again, because of material/economic factors such as finding a studio or apartment large enough to house a studio; finding work which can sustain the artistic practice; finding a gallery which would show their work; but also because of the socio-cultural factors such as re-establishing contacts, face-to-face relationships with other artists or people involved in the art world in Montreal, and other people in general. At first, many did not know where to go or how to proceed. And a little bit blindly most eventually found some small networks, although their primary networks related to art remain for the most part those established prior to coming to Canada.

It's a completely different story for Quebecois artists who grew up with/in the 'system' and who did their first (B.F.A.) or secondary studies (M.F.A) in art in Montreal. Their networks are solid and operate on a collective basis. As all Quebecois artists said, the collective shows were really the most important ones (even though it is the solo shows that establish one's career). The space of networks, it is clear, is the space of exchanges, a fact mentioned several times by all of the artists. As one Quebecois artist said, in Montreal, artists are part of a community of artists and people who appreciate arts. It is a mutually supportive community, although separated in various parcels. One difference between Quebecois and immigrant artists seems to be the character of the 'local' artistic communities they are establishing. Immigrant artists mentioned the diversity of the friends they made, Quebecois and 'others', and emphasised the

importance of the same vision of the world among all the people of the group. One artist called it the "culture de base", not the 'ethnic' culture, but rather the social or 'intellectual' culture. This is suggestive of a translocal/transcultural space in which these artists construct their lives because they reiterate a rhetoric of uniformity and equality, a civic and democratic ideal they would like to reach, in a very competitive domain, where access to funds is especially limited (primarily public funds through grants which are controlled by local public institutions, like the provincial arts council). Furthermore, this type of rhetoric, which is probably sincere, 'supports' the artistic rhetoric of universalism and of social responsibility (artists as citizens on par with the rest of society). The reality is quite different.

Quebecois artists although making it clear Montreal is just a "point d'attache" (leaving doors open) and nothing more, do reveal a stronger connection to the city, if only through the many and diversified networks they 'inhabit'. Moreover, these artists emphasised the francophone nature of the networks they were part of and talked more of the relationship they have with anglophone artists (or the lack thereof) or the relationships their group established outside of Quebec, usually with other groups in Europe. Asked about the nature of these groups, they are almost only composed of Quebecois francophone artists and some anglophone artists. Why not others? No one could answer; I was reassured it certainly was not exclusion since "art has no boundaries", or "La communauté (d'artistes) je la vois en tant qu'international". All of the Quebecois, except one artist, keep some connection with some types of international networks. This one artist was no able to go anywhere yet because of her economic and

home situation[8]. This supports my second view that Quebecois artists will have an intermediary position, one which is to a degree translocal/transcultural since they establish trnasnational connections, and one which is also localised, grounded in Montreal, and most of all, in Quebec and its own identity politics. It must be said though that for all of the Quebecois artists, when they moved to Montreal, they also mentioned a certain difficulty in establishing networks; however, certainly it did not take them as long as immigrant artists to integrate these networks. One artist says, "Ça m'a pris du temps avant que je connaisse des gens ici. Je ne suis pas intégré dans *un* centre d'artistes. Plusieurs. Et dans les plus petites places le contact est plus facile. Il y a des centres qui ont le même mandat et ne se parle pas".

If time had permitted, it would have been interesting to see the relationships between anglophone as well as francophone artists and their perceptions of Quebecois identity. Here, only superficially, it seemed that although Quebecois artists work in a translocal/transcultural space where artistic practice crosses national boundaries, art for them remains contextualised/localised; thus it seems Quebecois artists are still bound inside a particular place.

To further establish the transcultural/translocal nature of the space that artists construct their life in, it is important to look at the relevance of movement to their lives. All of the artists found it crucial at some point in their lives to move. Travel or movement here does not mean travel as tourism; rather it is a movement in the global

[8] It is worth mentioning that women are much more tied down to place and have less mobility than men. In the case of this artist she has a daughter she has to take care.

space linked closely to artistic practice. Traditionally, the question of an artist living and working in a geographical space not matching his origins was linked to notions of the exotic and the liberty of movement. Now, it is also seen as a constraint, an obligation, the risks of globalization, all in the name of an artistic "freedom of expression" on the one hand, but also of a national affirmation on the other (Bellavance, 1999a), from the institutional point of view. For the artists it is a question of "dépaysement", a perfectly apt term in this situation, which was reiterated several times by all of the artists, for whom gong somewhere else meant discovering other cultures, other people, and was tied to the discovery of the 'self' and one's own point of reference. As one artist put it,

> Pour avoir une autre perception des choses... parce que je savais bien que ma perception que j'ai des choses... vient d'un monde dans lequel je suis habitué d'être... donc j'ai plein de prejugés par raport au monde dans lequel on est donc je suis aller voir ailleurs pour me donner un autre air quand je reviens..une autre perception parce que je vois que les gens vivent autrement ailleurs.

This movement as part of a search of international art shows is more than just "dépaysement", it is a strategy to expand one's visibility and escape Montreal's "dead art market". Bellavance (1999a: 6) writes,

> Comme l'a souligné Charles Taylor, l'identité la plus intime, la plus authentique, n'est pas indépendente de la reconnaissance publique. De même, l'identité nationale semble étroitwement liée à la possibilité d'une reconnaissance internationale. (...) La diffusion culturelle internationale est de fait l'une des voies d'expression privilegiée de l'affirmation nationale, et du nationalisme culturel. De la sorte, affirmation nationale et prestige culturel international ne sont bien souvent que les deux faces d'une même monnaie. Un tel besoin de diffusion tient peut-être en partie à l'étroitesse du marché indigène: il faut exporter, et donc, s'exporter, investir à l'étranger, et donc s'y investir.

The difference is that Quebecois artists usually leave with the 'blessing' of an arts council grant, in many cases as representatives of Quebec, while immigrant artists if they can leave to expose elsewhere, it is because they were not successful in finding sufficient funds locally through grants or were not accepted by the local galleries. It would be interesting to explore further this dynamic among Quebecois artists, who seem also to work within networks and collectivities when they go abroad to show their work, as opposed to immigrant artists who usually go 'artistically alone', that is not accompanied by or with the support of a group.

However, travel is not only physical, as writes James Clifford (1997), but can be part of imagined relationships tied by media such as television, radio, the Internet, and newspapers. As Appadurai also (1991) mentioned, imagination is also important in maintaining connections between people, space and place. One immigrant artist said, "physical place is a psychological (mental) place... it's not... The physical world is the matrix upon which extends our mental field, therefore there is no difference between a physical and a mental place. (...)". Another talked of a "voyagement d'idées", and the metaphor of a man with a suitcase always filled with information to exchange.

The various forms of travel or movement are all important for the artists interviewed in this study, since to repeat, they do not only connect the place of origin with Montreal, but also it is a way to open opportunities for people in a very precarious situation globally. However, most artists admit they have little time or money to spend on especially long-distance travel. Often it is their artwork, which travels through this

global space physically, and for some even 'virtually' on the Internet. Most of the immigrant artists said that stability was now more important than instability through movement.

5.5 The dialogue of Place and Space: between the local and the global

From the findings presented here it seems clearly that immigrant artists are more sensitive to a translocal/transcultural notion of space as they construct their lives living and working in Montreal. However, in some ways, the differences that exist between the two groups do not seem as distinct as I had hypothesised, at least within the scope of this thesis. However, one difference does seem to emerge is these artists feel excluded, because of the way the art world is organised. Although Quebecois artists share the same artistic space, which is transcultural/translocal, they have to compete for the same grants as immigrant artists; they are a priori in the same precarious economic and social situation. However, they are part of the local networks, even historically speaking, in terms of their ties to at least one 'parallel' gallery. Certainly doing some deeper probing might have revealed an even deeper attachment of Quebecois artists to their place, not Montreal but the *idea of their place*: Quebec.

In the case of immigrant artists they seem to inhabit an 'unbound culture', at least in their discourse, one which abolishes all kinds of boundaries and othering strategies. Perhaps this can be explained by a legitimating strategy these artists deploy, as mentioned before, one which tries to facilitate their incorporation into the social fabric of Quebec. The problem immigrant artists have in constructing autonomous and legitimate artistic

practices in Montreal has to do with the way the local (local cultural policies) as well as the global institutionalised (art world) context which reacts to them as cultural producers. Art *is* a place of contest, wrote Marcus and Myers (1995). Artists must construct their identities in terms of legitimating strategies in a local space.

Thus, immigrant artist with their discourse of rejection of their "ghettoised" cultural communities, and the rejection of fragmentation in general ("art as life"; "art has no boundaries"; "art is universal"), 'run' against the nation's discourse (Quebec/Montreal's or Canada's; both opposing discourses of interculturalism and multiculturalism), the aim of which is a totalising segmentation, that is 'unity by division'. It is thus not an internal segmentation by the individual, but a segmentation imposed from the outside on the individual. The only internal segmentation has to do with being recognised as an artist, which is the situation for all artists. But the immigrant artist with his universalising and encompassing discourses is perceived as a threat, wrapped in ambivalence, because they are unclassifiable, unbound. Thus, it will be very important to see how the governments of Quebec and Montreal will develop their future cultural policies, in a context of creating an inclusive "new society" (as the rhetoric goes).

All in all, it is cultural action, the making and the remaking of identities, in the contact zones, the different borders, where the "margins, lines and edges of communication emerge as maps and histories" that "a translocal culture (not global or universal)", of multiple attachments, can be enacted (Clifford, 1997). Thus, globalisation and transnationalism seem as much cultural identity traits linked to young urban artists

and professionals as they are to marginal migrants seeking to reconstruct their lives (Hannerz, 1996). What transpires in this thesis is that all of the artists, whether immigrant or Quebecois, share in their discourse a common approach to life, indeed a lifestyle, a shared space, experiential and imagined, even though their experiences of artistic practice differ, and are tied to several 'external' factors. The different binarisms presented here always hide relations of power, and boundaries can then be seen as managing the tension between private attitudes/lifestyle, which oppose the dichotomising bureaucratic reality of 'us' and 'them'.

Furthermore, what really seems to matter is the *process* of art-making, artistic practice itself, especially as creative process: this is what is universal in the eyes of the artists. And this universality lies on a *continuum* with the particular, personal expression of each individual artist. Artists will keep breaching boundaries, creating a dialogue between the different, sometimes disparate, aspects life has to offer, since such is the creative nature of art and life, especially as one constructs it from a precarious social and economic position. It is within this 'global' space that all the other places and spaces we looked at here are subsumed and inter-react, intersect, overlap, as both groups of artists construct their lives despite the real presence of local boundaries and processes that actively work against the creation of this global space. It is this aspect that would necessitate further work. Thus, although both groups share the same artistic space, where they use the same rhetoric, perhaps, at a local level, Quebecois artists, because they are part of, integrated in the local space, they are able to navigate in it and (unwillingly) appropriate symbolically the place of immigrant artists, who then become further

excluded instead of included. It becomes then an inclusion at the rhetorical level but not a daily reality.

Conclusion

> Le partage reste le meilleur garant de la paix. La musique et les arts constituent un antidote à ce qui fait obstacle à l'harmonie entre les hommes. – Y. Menuhin

The different flows of people, ideas, objects, capital across national boundaries force us to reconsider the relationship between culture/Culture, place and the people who inhabit this space. In this study it was shown that all of the artists, whether immigrant or Quebecois, share a common approach to life, indeed a lifestyle, a shared 'global' space, experiential and imagined, in their discourse, even though their localized experiences of artistic practice(s) are different, and are tied to several 'external' factors, the most influential one being the organization of the art world, especially in terms of grants giving. Relations of power are very real in the situations presented here, and boundaries can then be seen as managing the tension between private attitudes/lifestyle, which oppose the dichotomising bureaucratic reality of 'us' and 'them'.

Most artists live precarious situations politically, economically, socially. However, this is not to suggest they are completely isolated and alienated. On the contrary, immigrant as well as Quebecois artists find creative ways to gain legitimation. The big difference here is that Quebecois artists have the social/political tools (e.g. through networks, which are tied to the artists' education) and have the 'support' of nationalizing institutions to negotiate their place and space, while immigrant artists do not. Thus, they create a translocal/transcultural space, which becomes ambiguous in any localized context. Whether they are 'here' or 'over there', they are never considered as 'natives'. Familiar strangers.

Certainly one of the important confirmations in this thesis is the importance of the construction of strategic relations and networks, where individuals negotiate across different forms of boundaries. Artistic practice is not as individual as artists and others would like to think. It is multiple, a "network-in-becoming", entangled between the public and the private spheres, where boundaries are constantly crossed, negotiated, re-drawn. To reiterate Gupta and Ferguson (1992), space as place is better reflected in the cultural construction of 'communities of relations', or networks, formed within an organised space of unequal relations.

In this thesis, I tried to give a brief look into the way two groups of visual artists, who share a certain intellectual urban culture, construct their lives as an 'unbound culture', under the constraints of localising and globalizing forces. The artists' desire for an 'unbound culture' is translated by their willingness to share and exchange. Let the dialogue begin.

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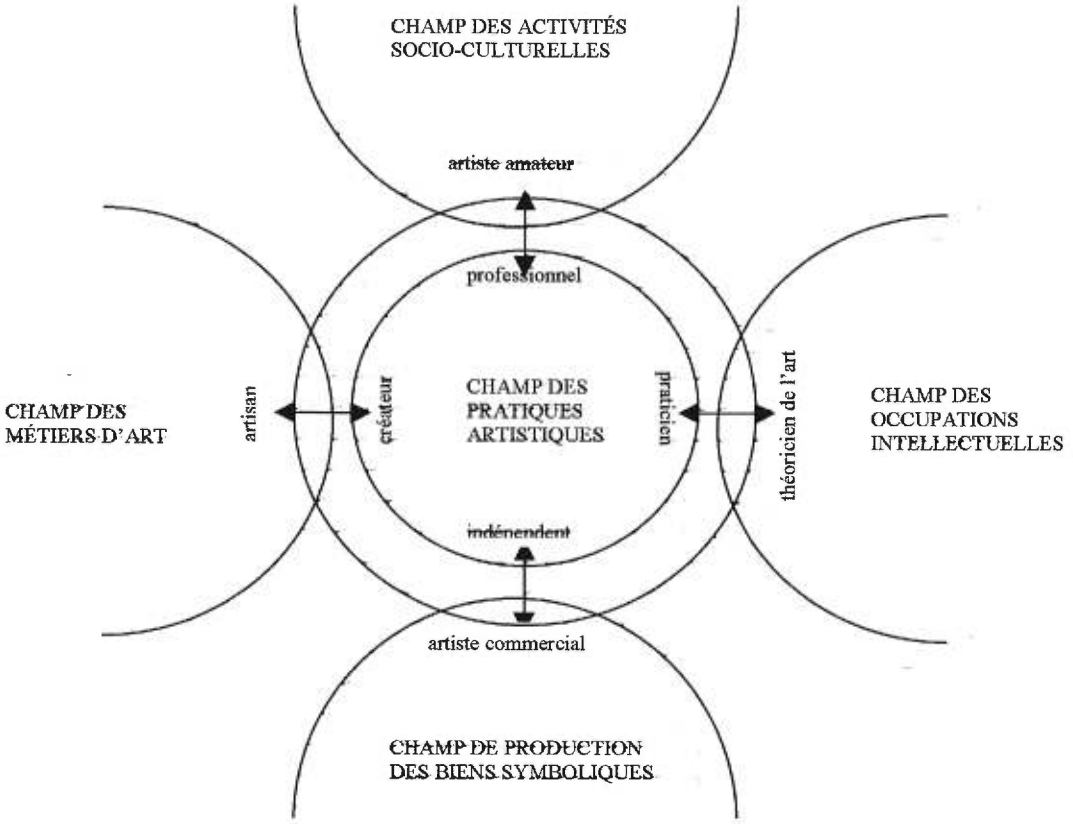
pendix 1

ıre. 1. From Bernier and Perrault (1985), two schemas of the field of artistic practice..
he field of artistic practice and its borders



b. Two axes of artistic practice

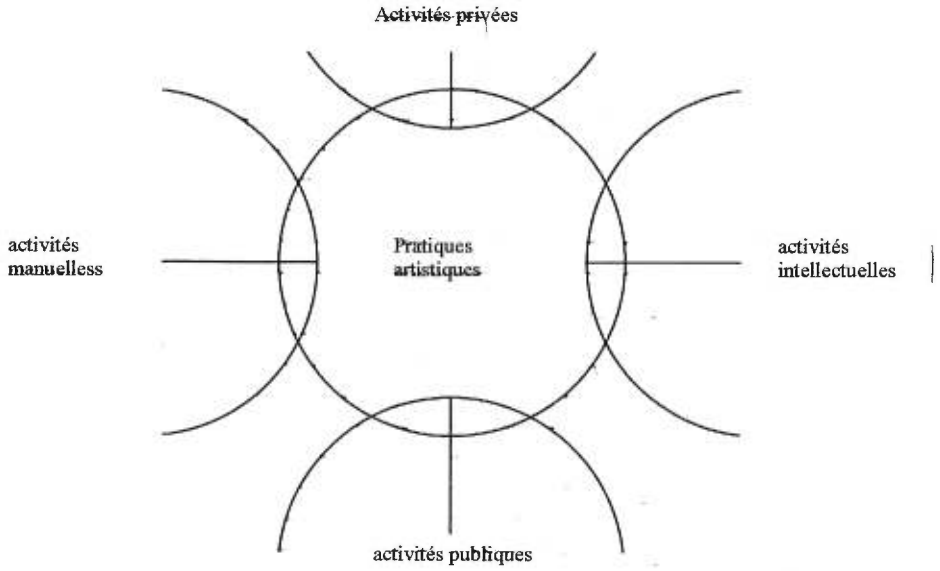
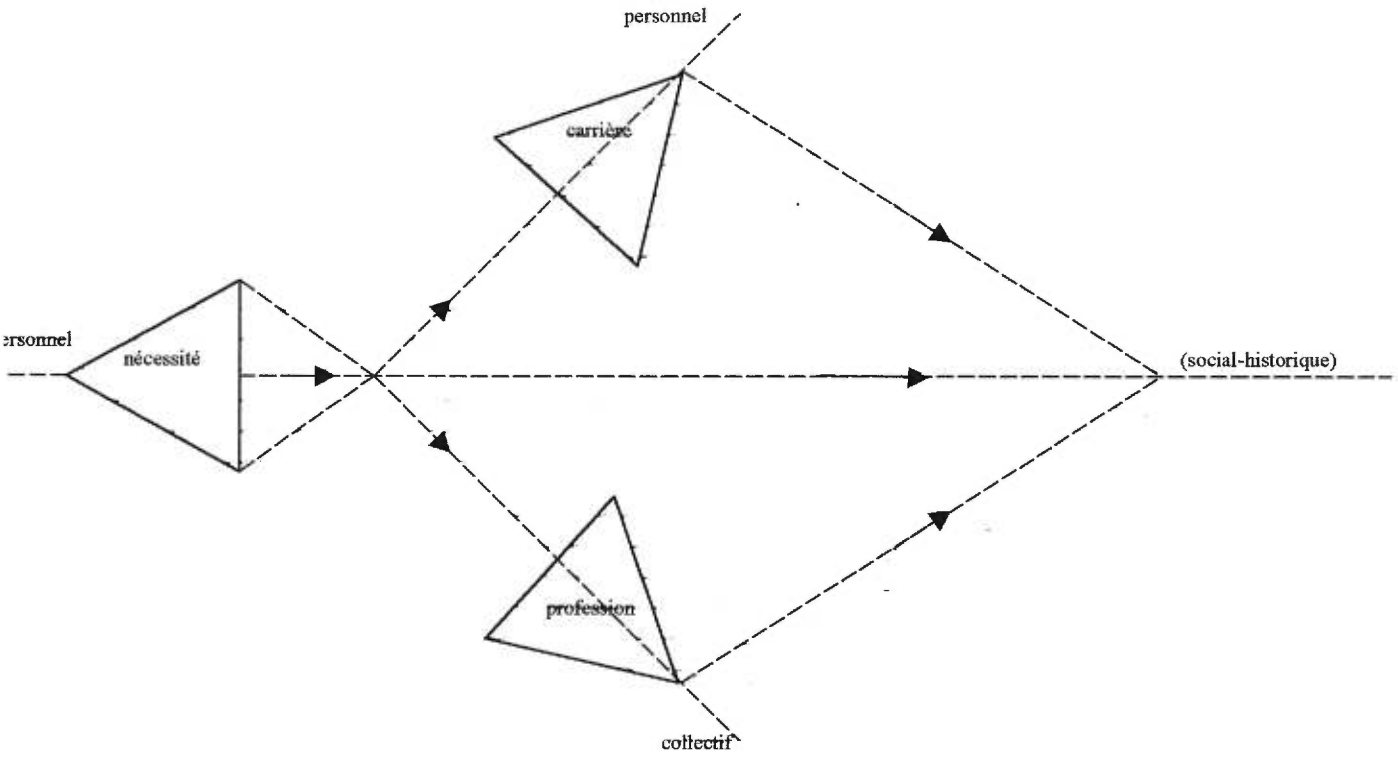


Figure 2. The integration of the three discourses/'definitions' of artistic practice



Appendix 2

1. Interview Guide

Personal Information
Name
Gender
Age
Languages spoken/used

Relationship to the place of origin
Place of birth; Origins; family

Artistic history
Education
Length of practice
Diffusion of artwork before immigration

Artistic practice in the present
Creation (Medium/Materials used; Studio; etc)
Diffusion of artwork in Montreal/elsewhere (Quebec/Canada/International; where; how)
Other employment(s)

History of Emigration
Length of time in Montreal/Quebec/Canada since (e/im)migration
Reason(s) for leaving place of origin
Other places of residence before Montreal
Length of stay in these places
Reason(s)
Age at arrival
Family

Montreal
Reasons for choosing Montreal
Knowledge of and participation in culture/art in Montreal/Canada/international

Networks (social/artistic)
Participation in groups or associations
Immigrant artists

Movement/Communication
Contact with places outside of Montreal/Quebec/Canada
Reasons
Methods
Travel experiences