

Architectural Episodes – A Dialogue for Occupancy

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Abstract

This thesis will examine the interaction between constructed environments and individuals through an exploratory design process. Through the investigation of past and contemporary architecture processes, this research will question our sensorial experience of built space: how scale impacts our perception, material influences our choices, architectural element can create a feeling of belonging, and how conception of a designed space impacts quality of life.

Explored through twelve vignettes: Context, Shared Space, Behaviour, House, Home, Belonging, Scale, Material, Qualities, Poetic, Dialogue, and Happiness this project aims to apply these themes to the design of a small family house. This single family detached home with a floor area of approximately one hundred square meters will be situated in eastern Quebec, on the coast of the Gaspé Bay. Through the design of this house I will study how the qualities of what is construct can be the dialogue between occupant and space.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the result of years of support from my friends and family. This project would not have been possible without the constant encouragements from my parents Sylvie and André. Thank you for believing in me. I am grateful for my loving partner Philippe. I also want to thank Johan Voordouw, my thesis advisor, for his advices, editing and continuous inputs.

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All watercolours, drawings and photographs by Marie-Eve Lavigne

Prologue

My aspiration as a student in architecture and as a future architect is to design space where one can feel plenitude, comfort, and at home. This thesis is an investigation on the architectural design process. The twelve vignettes are twelve ways of looking at how we act in concert with the way we create homes. As Zumthor said in *Thinking Architecture*: "to a large degree, designing is based on understanding and establishing systems of order."¹ Which I am modestly trying to achieve through this thesis. There is no one truth in this process, truth is plural here, and prone to change with time and practice.

I will explore how a practice of architecture can be human centric as oppose to a practice that answered only to a program based on impersonal checklists of minimum requirements. Through examination of case studies where the requirements in terms of square meters were met, but no social space were planned with the user in mind. In social housing cases (Pruitt Igoe, St. Louis; Regent Park, Toronto; etc.) where an ideal master plan or complex was elaborated but none of the social aspects were functioning and the buildings ended up being overall inhumane. These issues apply to small housing as well. Only answering to requirement will create space but my goal is to create good spaces while trying to answer to both needs, and desires of the client. A small family should be able to live in a home that reflects their necessities but can also prepare, incline or even accentuate enjoyment.

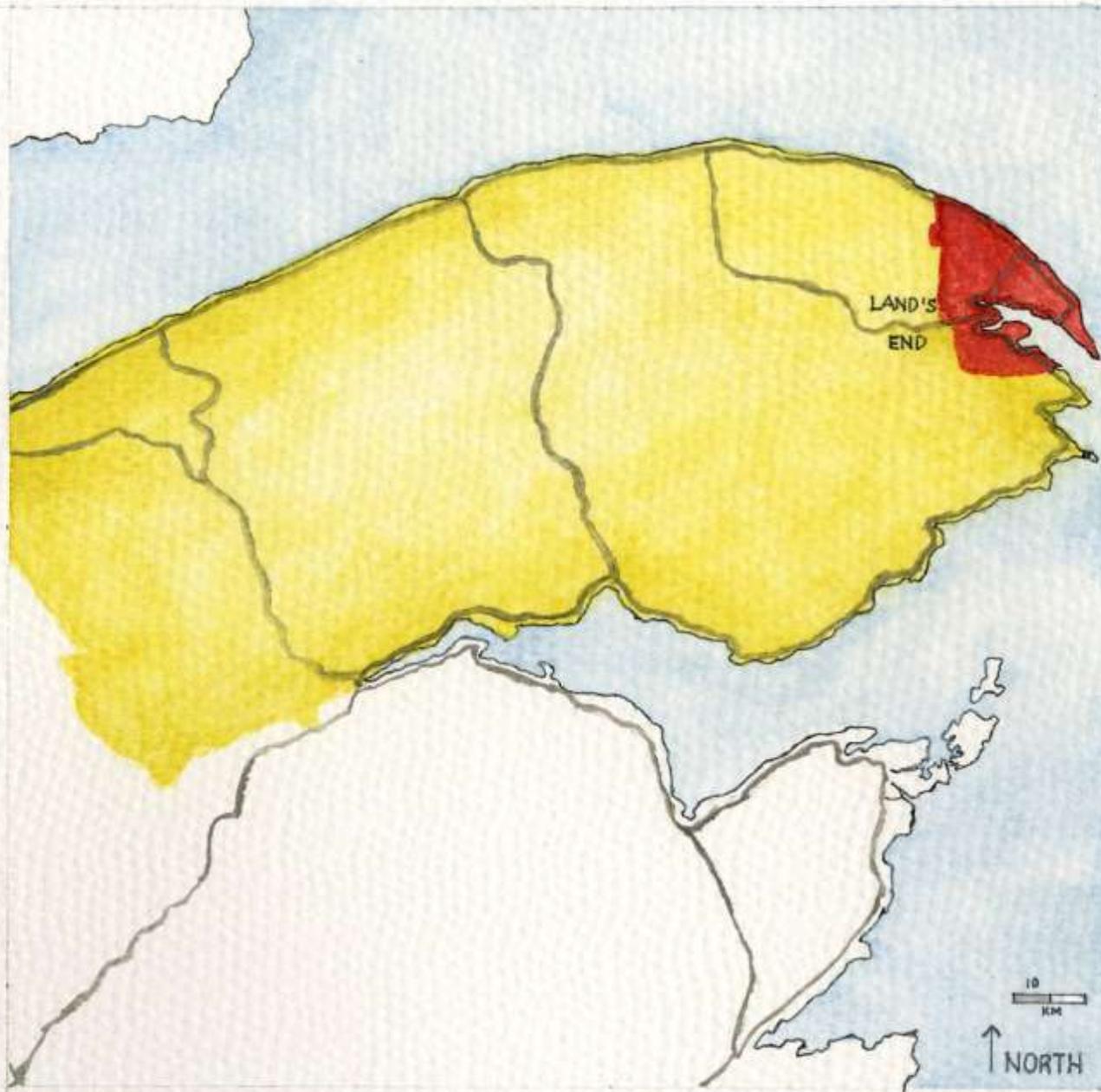
¹ Peter Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture* (Basel, Switzerland: Birkhäuser, 2006), 21.



Gaspe in Canada



Gaspe in Quebec



Gaspe in Gaspésie

Introduction

This thesis aims to develop an architectural design process through the exploration of twelve vignettes: Context, Shared Space, Behaviour, House, Home, Belonging, Scale, Material, Qualities, Poetic, Dialogue, and Happiness. The twelve vignettes were chosen because of their intricate relationship with the design process. They are part of a personal study, and may be subject to change through someone else's lenses for another project or another time. Through the investigation on how to proceed with this thesis subject, the choice was made to divide the twelve vignettes on a period of twelve months that was close to the length of this exploration. The themes were moved from one month to another throughout the working process in order to find the place where each belonged in regards to both the site, and my own personal journey.

The intent is to find a way to express identity, memory, and culture in the development of designed elements, and spaces on a specific site in Gaspé, Quebec in the form of a single-family home. Gaspésie region was chosen for its qualities, and because it is where I would like to start practicing architecture as an intern. I am interested in this topic because of the importance of always questioning and revisiting the way we think about architecture. Furthermore because of the fascinating way humans interact with built forms, and how we always try to associate with the construct. Hence, I aspire to develop a methodology of how we develop architecture in concert with how we respond to its qualities.

This research is significant because critical thinking and exploration are essential to stimulate creativity and innovate in architecture. It helps us, students, designers, architects, define and create elements through investigative lenses. I will refer to key authors and academics references in the field such as Alberto Pérez-Gomez, Peter Zumthor, Martin Heidegger, Henri Lefebvre, and Robert Mellin.

Pérez-Gomez, in *Attunement: Architecture Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* talks about how built architecture by its physical situation influence our well-being and our values through inhabitation. Zumthor, in *Thinking Architecture*, describe his own approach to architecture, his design process, his relationship embedded in materials as much as in memories, and how every aspect of his life added together created the way he designs space. Heidegger, in *Building Dwelling Thinking*, defines dwelling and its relationship to building, how they relate to each other, how dwelling is an end and building is a mean. Lefebvre, in *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, explores how architecture revolves around the body, and question how architecture can support or prepare for enjoyment. Mellin's books: *Tilting, House Launching, Slide Hauling, Potato Trenching, and other Tales from a Newfoundland Fishing Village* and *Winter in Tilting*, are two books written in Fogo Island, a coastal Eastern-Canadian context. These two books contain a poetic² text as well as pictures, sections, details, hand drawn maps and paintings by the author. The layout of this thesis is inspired by *Winter in Tilting*, which is a beautifully written and illustrated book.

² Poetic: "Something that is very beautiful and expresses emotions in a sensitive or moving way." (Collins)

I will link my research to these authors whose thoughts and writing echoed in part the principles of my own system of order translated through a poetic palette of twelve vignettes. This thesis as means for further debate can benefit my peers who wish to try a different approach to aesthetic and creativity in architecture.

The scope of this research is colored by a French Canadian frame of reference as a Quebecer myself. The client is a small family, two parents with two young children. The members of the family are Gaspesians, and have a personal attachment to the Gaspé area. They want a home where their children will grow up, and where they will grow old. They have a long-term vision, and consider that their house will evolve with them in time.

My focus is in the order of small-scale contextual architecture, but the reflection might apply to other scales. The operation of questioning design processes through the poetic of these vignettes is not meant to be exclusive to single dwelling units. My research method is exploratory, poetic, modest and meant to be humane. This dialogue will evolve through time, four seasons, expressed monthly within each vignette where temporality will influence the discourse in each of them. Each lens is part of one another but is exposed as an entity.

One

Winter



Context

January in Gaspé, the ground is frozen, and the land is covered with snow. The only trees still partially covering the view are the ones with thorns. The wind is coming down from the Northwest, blowing towards the bay. It is the best time of the year to have a clear view of the waterfront, the sunrises, and the sunsets. It is the finest moment to evaluate what are the least favourable climatic conditions on the site, which side is more exposed, which side receives the strongest wind, and is most vulnerable to the winter weather. This month is ideal to assess where most of the winter sun lands and which natural elements between the cliff, the shore, and the road can act as protection from harsh and cold long winters. Where are the trees that could block part of the wind, and the ones that allow the sun to reach in? How can we use the slope in our favour, and examine the best assets on the lot? Which qualities prevail, and where can this relationship between wilderness and construct start? It is the embryo of the dialogue.



Ice Fishing Village on Gaspé Bay

Context is both environmental and cultural. In Gaspé, the cultural landscape³ is greatly influenced by its contrasting climatic conditions between the sea and the mountain as well as by its vernacular architecture that is mainly a product of European settlers. The context framework has physical aspects and site qualities. Each of these features is playing a role toward what will be built.

The name Gaspé is derived from Gespeg in the Indigenous Micmac culture, and means Land's End. A typical aspect of the Gaspésie region is the peninsula, and its proximity to water; the majority of the settlements are along the coast. The mountainous topography of the midland added to the European settlers' transportation and economy that was for the longest time revolving around fishing resulted in a land division that made each lot have access to the water from a small beach.⁴

Alberto Pérez-Gomez looking back at architecture and environmental psychology over the past sixty years writes how our surroundings, and their disposition around us affect us. It is not only a question of human construct, it also takes nature into account: "the environment matters [...] it is nothing less than a constituent part of our consciousness."⁵ Hence, the choice of the site and its qualities are both characteristic to the occupant's well being and to the way the inhabitant will appropriate it. In

³ "The Committee acknowledged that cultural landscapes represent the "combined works of nature and of man" designated in Article 1 of the Convention. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal.

The term 'cultural landscape' embraces a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment." (World Heritage Convention - UNESCO)

⁴ *The Vernacular Architecture Forum (VAF) 34th Annual Meeting* (June 11-15, 2013), Gaspé, Québec, Canada.

⁵ Alberto Pérez-Gomez, *Attunement: Architecture Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2016), 1-2.

Building Dwelling Thinking, Heidegger discusses how a building creates a location, how it allows for space and gatherings.⁶ As Beings, we create spaces that are within boundaries, and we exist by coming through "presencing" in these locations. It is in our nature to modify our environment while adapting to what it has to offer.

In this project, the topography in Gaspé is especially irregular: cliffs, sandy banks, valleys, forest and mounts from the Appalachians influence the implementation of the building as much as the orientation of the dwelling on site. How as a designer we place a building will impact its integration into the landscape. Where we locate a construction should respect its settings, and consider its visual connection with its surroundings. As conscious organisms we have an innate need to be in contact with natural milieus. Therefore, considering the eye level will facilitate a better relationship with the context for the future occupants by creating a link from the inside to the outside.

The population of the region is rich in cultural origins: the first inhabitants were the Micmac, then in the 16th Century the Irish, Scot, Basque, Breton, French, English, crossed the Atlantic, and colonized the area over time. The vernacular architecture of the region, however, has some recurrence in its form and materials. Most houses are one-and-a-half-storey wooden structure with a slope roof, some with flared eaves. A typical rectangular plan with rooms situated on each side of a central passage, and an L-shaped staircase. This configuration was repeated on both floors. Every room has one or two sash windows, which are divided in either eight-over-eight or six-over-six pane configurations, also known as sliding box sash window from the 17th Century. A chimney is placed at either end of the house that was heated by woodstoves with pipes

⁶ Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Collins, 1971), 149-156.

running through the rooms just beneath the ceilings. Most of the houses were originally finished and roofed in cedar shingles.⁷ The eastern white cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, grows in the boreal region, and it has been used for centuries in Gaspésie because of its robustness, and its resistance to decay in humid environments.

Settlers built their houses with the available materials. They used their cultural knowledge of architecture for cold climate taking into consideration the physical elements that the site had to offer. As Zumthor said in *Thinking Architecture*, "Every new work of architecture intervenes in a specific historical situation. It is essential to the quality of the intervention that the new building should embrace qualities that can enter into a meaningful dialogue with the existing situation."⁸ Vernacular architecture in Gaspésie has that relationship; that exchange with its location.

⁷ *The Vernacular Architecture Forum* (VAF) 34th Annual Meeting (June 11-15, 2013), Gaspé, Québec, Canada.

⁸ Peter Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture* (Basel, Switzerland: Birkhäuser, 2006), 17-18.



Cap-Aux-Os

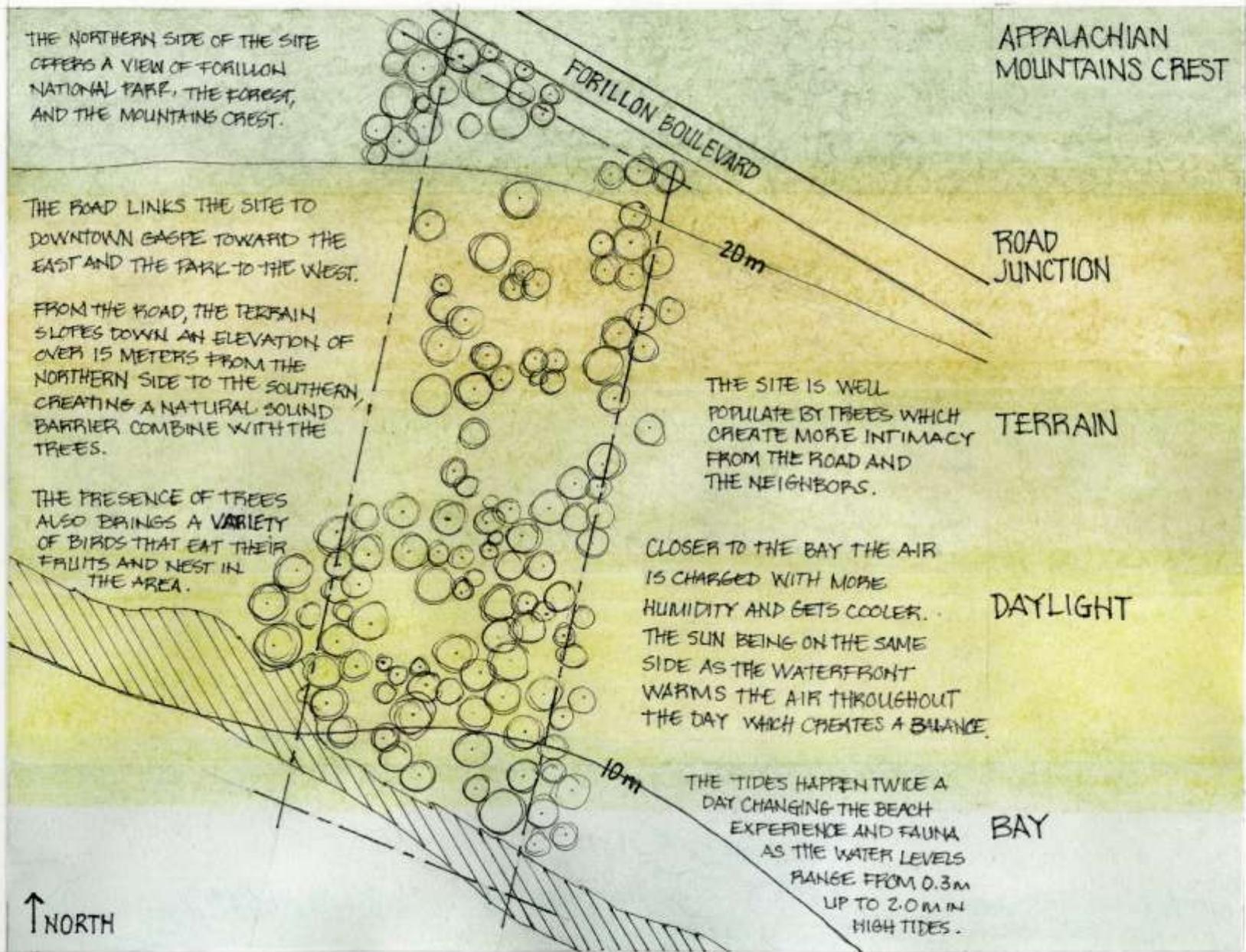


Site Location

Shared Space

"Existence here is among and dependent upon other beings and non-beings - 'the world' is shared." (Nietzsche)

February in Gaspé, the weather is getting capricious. There are very cold days, and some seldom rainy days. The whole ground becomes your terrace, it seems like the terrain has reached a new level with its crust of combined layers of snow and ice. Your snowshoes are one of the best means to get from your house to your car. Clearing snow and de-icing is part of day-to-day life. There are snowbanks all around the foundations of the house creating a winter coat that adds some insulation against the cold wind on the perimeter of the exterior walls. Now that the position and the orientation of the home have been assessed, it is time to discuss the program. Define the spaces addressing the occupants' needs, listening to their living habits, and how they want their home to evolve through time.



Emotional Site

In Gaspé, shared spaces convey certain qualities: the backyard facing the bay is where there is enough sun, but shadow as well to sit and enjoy company. On the front porch below street level is where you gather as you let your friends know that you are home, and they are welcome to stop by. The land you are working on is a communal garden that you cultivate and harvest with your family. The kitchen is where you wash, clean and cook what you retrieved from the land, and now share with your love ones.

Shared space is dimensional and we, as designer, want to create spaces where that will flourish. The house, in its settings is a place of sharing and enjoyments. In the *Life of Lines* Tim Ingold talks about our relationship with the earth and how we inhabit it. Ingold exposes the exchange between the living beings and the world, "We do not live inside our bodies, but - in breathing and eating - continually and alternately gather the world into ourselves and release ourselves into the world."⁹ Shared space is an ongoing dialogue with the world. As an exchange, as a continuous relationship between the inhabitants, the earth and the construct, there is a beautiful poetic in taking care of this dialogue.

Ingold questions "How different would it be if we thought of our homes and of the terrains that we inhabit in the same way?"¹⁰ The action of sharing a space is what makes a place lively. The house is communal; its spaces are shared both inside and outside. This is why context is as important as the construct when programming through design and both should be

⁹ Tim Ingold, "Surfaces" in *The Life of Lines*, ed. Taylor and Francis (New York: Routledge, 2015) 42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

thought of in the same way, as one shared entity that makes the house whole. As Tony Fry states: "The earth, the sky and the ocean: the home as the world given and the world of our own creation."¹¹

Shared space in this study is the environment as the world of a small family, as their common places, and more specifically as their home and its surroundings. Space in a house can be intimate as in a notion of retreat as much as it can be common. It is a question of levels of privacy, although almost every room is to some degree shared.

Space in Gaspé's context is either natural or created. The site, before any intervention is at its natural state until the landscape is manipulated to integrate the house. The intention of the design process is to minimize the alteration of the natural elements, and maximize the integration of the dwelling within the landscape. In both cases, either as earth or as construct, what is of interest is how humans occupy and share the space. Shared space can be temporal within the house, a brief moment in time, a pause. It is the kitchen where you share a meal, the hallway where you cross path, the ledge of a window by which you sit, the patio where you watch the sunset, or it can also be culturally rooted. Gaspé being an outcast portion of Quebec, the habits may feel to an outsider as frozen in time. Being an area where large families shared small housing units, the notion of sharing is by itself common use. Shared space has many layers: the culture of the region, the local habits and practices, and it is situational as well as seasonal. Sitting by the fireplace in the winter, or by the fire pit in the summer is a nice way for

¹¹ Tony Fry, *Becoming Human by Design* (New York: Berg, 2012) 3-4.

Gaspeians to share a defined space as the living room or a projected space as the one created by the halo of light and heat of the fire.

Jan Gehl studied the notion of shared spaces, and conveys the need and the love of sharing spaces with others. The notion of shared space is not limited nor characteristic to urban areas, what makes a region lively and resilient is its inhabitants, and their need to cultivate relationships with the land and with others. In *Soft Edges in Residential Streets*, Gehl express very simply: "people come where people are."¹² We gather because we are social, we appreciate the company of others, or as Fry, reiterating Gehl's statement, writes "We cannot come into or remain in being without other."¹³ We get together in places that we feel safe, that are not only well lit but exude warmth. We like being in places that educe comfort and delight. Gaspe has that quality in both its people and its landscapes.

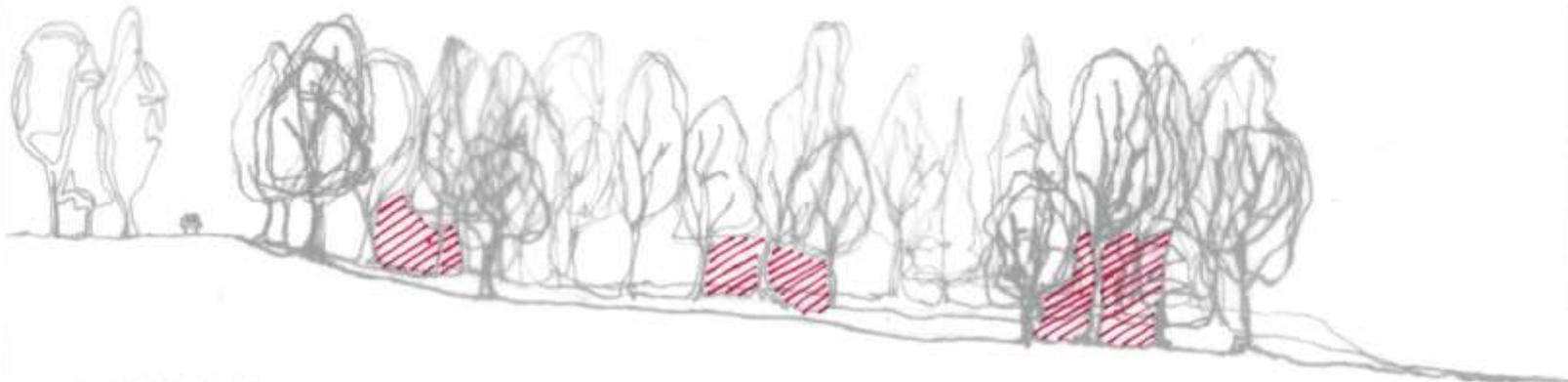
¹² Jan Gehl, "'Soft Edges' in Residential Streets" in *Scandinavian Housing and Planning Research 3* (Copenhagen, Denmark: 1986) 90.

¹³ Tony Fry, *Becoming Human by Design* (New York: Berg, 2012) 44.

1. HIGHEST AREA OVERLOOKING THE BAY, CLOSER TO THE ROAD, YOU CAN HEAR THE TRUCK TRAFFIC DURING THE SUMMER.

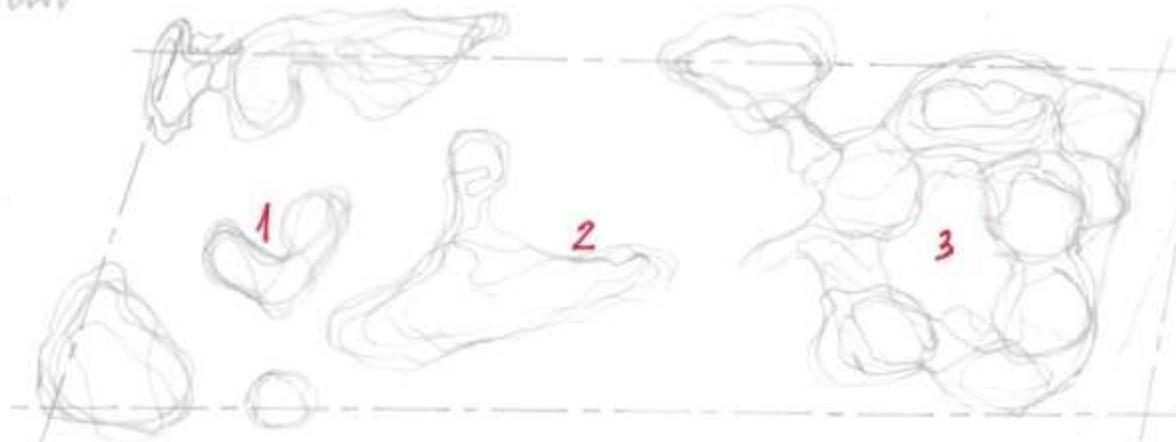
2. MID-LEVEL, PLATEAU BETWEEN THE BAY AND THE ROAD. PARTLY HIDDEN FROM SURROUNDING NOISES AND NEIGHBORS.

3. LOWEST AREA, CLOSEST TO THE BAY AND PRIVATE ACCESS TO THE SMALL BEACH ENCLOSED BY TREES AND THE SOUND OF THE WAVES WHEN THEY HIT THE ROCKS.



DE FORILLON BLVD

GASPE BAY



1:1250
← NORTH

Serial Site Sections

Behavior

"[T]he response of an individual, group, or species to its environment." (Merriam-Webster)

March in Gaspé, winter is still very heavy, but there are more and more warmer days. The ice is starting to melt on the bay, the snow on the roofs is creating rivers down the gutters, and is streaming on site following the slopes, fissures and punctures of the ground. Occupancy through time is an expression of local behaviour, the types of habits that Gaspésians developed, like their houses typology: the shape of the roof, and the style as an answer to their ancestor's cultures. In an architectural expression, behavior is the vernacular of the past, and the transition to contemporary solutions, typologies and expressions. It is apparent inside as well, in the importance of the kitchen: numerous typical constructions have both a kitchen and an addition to the house that is called the summer kitchen that serves as a cold storage in the winter. It is well known that Gaspésians like kitchen parties.



Site photo - View towards Gaspé Bay

Behavior in this architectural project is the reaction of the small family through occupancy of their house. Behavior is our reaction to a particular condition, it is the way we conduct ourselves towards something that affects us emotionally or physically. In architecture, it is the manner built form influences the way we function. Tony Fry, in *Becoming Human by Design* explain that while we are biologically born we are brought into Being by a designed environment that conditions who we become over time. It is a temporal and situational process or reaction. Behavior is a response to a milieu. "So, in essence, we are all, in significant part changed by our world."¹⁴

In Gaspé, this "world", the family's environment is first composed by the site: the cliff, the beach, the canopy of the trees, the higher and lower grounds, the bay, the various immediacies, the context itself. The proximity to the cliff creates a sensation of danger and precariousness. One would expect fear as first reaction, but Gaspé is a peninsula, it is composed of cliffs and beaches which add to the splendor of it, and the inhabitants only want to find ways to be close to it not protected from it.

The beauty of the cliff makes you want to enjoy sitting near it, and look at the landscape that seems endless. The occupants want to be connected to the bay. Being able to go ice fishing or kitting in the winter, and go down for a swim or kayaking in the summer. Looking at the land, however, rises concerns for the building foundations, and the strength capacity

¹⁴ Tony Fry, *Becoming Human by Design* (New York: Berg, 2012) 131-132.

of the ground. Will there be erosion in the future? How strong is the earth we are building on? Hence, you want your family to be safe, and make sure to lessen the risks of living in proximity to such grandeur.

The propinquity to water provides similar sentiments. Having an overlook on the bay, and access to a small beach can feel as lovely as it can feel threatening. The duality is present, but being on site, getting acquainted with the landscape you realise how much more to gain there is by countering these fears. The contrasts, the presence of the colors in various shades and intensity of blues and greens: the bay, the trees, the land, the mountain, the sky, from the water to the firmament is enough reasons to conciliate with the settings. The beauty of the landscape is almost overwhelming, but appease when settling in, and getting acquainted with the place.

Once the landscape concerns have been taken into consideration within the design process, subsequently the architecture inside these settings is another set of elements that impacts us as beings. Behavior in the context of the house answers to light, warmth, texture, materials, dimensions, proportions, scale and space. It involves each one of our senses: our perception of space, our touch when we enter in contact with the materials, our scent when we enter a room, and our ears with the buzz or quietude of each area. Hence, we design space according to the interaction of the occupants, in sequence with their habits.

The order is based on the division of spaces: to the quiet areas moving away from the noisier, busier, activities and playful spaces. This chain of events in the house is reflected in the material choices: absorbent, softer surfaces toward and within calmer rooms to harder, practical, resistant materials in more active settings.

We behave in reaction to construct and the construct is in reaction to our everyday behavior. Jean Morval, professor of psychology at the University of Montreal, wrote on environmental psychology. In his book *La Psychologie Environnementale* Morval notes: "[L]'humain manipule l'environnement et l'environnement manipule l'humain. C'est ce qu'on appelle 'l'approche interactionniste' ou mieux 'transactionniste' en psychologie environnementale."¹⁵ [Humans manipulate the environment and the environment manipulates humans, which is called the 'interactionist' or the 'transactionalist' approach in environmental psychology.] That is a factor that as architect we want to consider. How the occupants will be influenced by their space, and how they will influence it back. It is an intricate process in the design of spaces. It will be related to scale and material but also to qualities and dialogue.

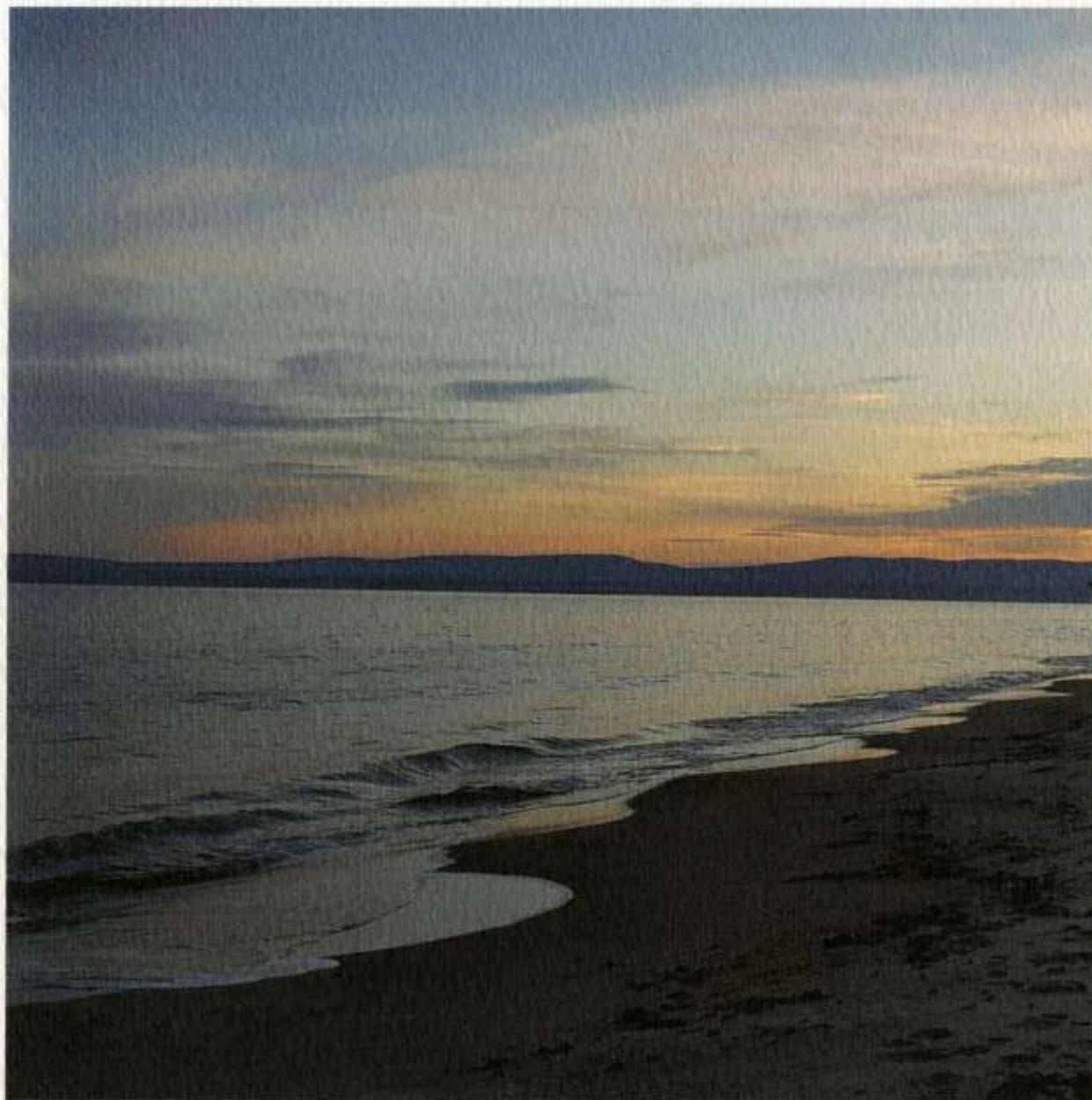
¹⁵ Jean Morval, *La psychologie environnementale* (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2007) 39.



Site photo - View towards the Appalachian mountains

Two

Spring



House

April in Gaspé, the weather is getting warmer, and the longing for fresh air is becoming stronger. Through the open windows, the occupant can once again enjoy the smells and sounds of the site and sea. The splatter of the waves hitting the rocks, the high tones of the birds signing, and the cracks of the branches under the paws of seldom mammals exploring the new odour of freshly melt ice and snow. Spring is the season of flood. All the snow that piled up over the winter is melting which makes it the perfect time to evaluate where the water runs off the site, where it goes, and which part is at risk of inundation. With the information from the winter, and now from the spring, the program is taking shape, and the choice of the location is an informed one. Keeping these facts in mind, the architect identifies what are the basic needs and conditions of the client as well as the site. This is the setting of what will develop into a home.



Spring fishing season in Gaspe

The house in the context of this thesis is defined as a shelter, as a boundary with the outside, the weathered environment. The house is a building for human habitation. Its primary function is to surround and protect our physical bodies. It is an envelope around our being. Clovis Heimsath, in *Behavioral Architecture; Toward an Accountable Design Process* critiques the way architects' of his time planned buildings, and suggests an alternative approach based on individuals. "Architecture, by definition, is built for people. Architecture is the enclosure in which people live their lives."¹⁶ It is the basis for further development, like a canvas waiting to be painted, it serves a purpose but it is still awaiting a deeper meaning. As the lyrics from Burt Bacharach and Hal David say so well: "A chair is still a chair, even when there's no one sittin' there, but a chair is not a house and a house is not a home when there's no one there to hold you tight, and no one there you can kiss goodnight."¹⁷

In this manner the house, as a boundary, is a technical thing, it is a technological thing in its architectural ensemble. It is a system. Each element that composes the house is meant to provide a healthy and safe environment for its inhabitants. To fulfill that goal, the architect has to consider its location, its surroundings, and the environmental conditions: weather, daylight, soil, wind, and adjacencies.

¹⁶ Clovis Heimsath, *Behavioral Architecture; Toward an Accountable Design Process* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977) 3.

¹⁷ Lyrics from A House Is Not a Home © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 1964

The boreal climate is the prominent climate in the area and the most diversified in both weather and vegetation. The region is subject to strong temperature variations, and precipitation caused by the relief and the maritime climate.¹⁸ The soil of the peninsula is composed of sedimentary rocks, and the network of numerous rivers and streams due to its origin as a glaciated trench.¹⁹ The seabed depth of Gaspé Bay makes it favorable for navigation so it is without surprise that you see cruise and cargo ships sail in and out of the bay. The bay is known historically as the place where Jacques Cartier planted his cross to take possession of the lands in the name of the King of France in July 1534. Since that time Gaspé Bay has been the scene of many shipwrecks from European ships that came for cod fishing and whale oil. In the nineteenth century, Gaspé area was producing eighty percent of the whale oil in North America. These activities were the origin of the cultural diversity of Gaspé's many European settlers. Their first establishments were shelters before they could become their homes.

The site of the single-family unit is situated in Cap-aux-Os, 25 kilometers to the east of the center of the town of Gaspé and toward Forillon National Park. This location contains all the many qualities of the region in a condensed piece of land: access to the water, a small sandy beach, a section of a cliff, a depression from the road down to the waterfront. The site is a microcosm. The southern side is facing Gaspé Bay and the northern side is facing the forest of the Appalachian. The house in these settings will answer to both coastal and mountain climate. The house is exposed to splendid landscapes in all directions and is susceptible to all its changing weather.

¹⁸ C. Poirier, "*Portrait territorial - Gaspésie - Îles-de-la-Madeleine*," Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la faune, 2006, <https://www.mern.gouv.qc.ca/publications/territoire/planification/portrait-gaspesie.pdf>

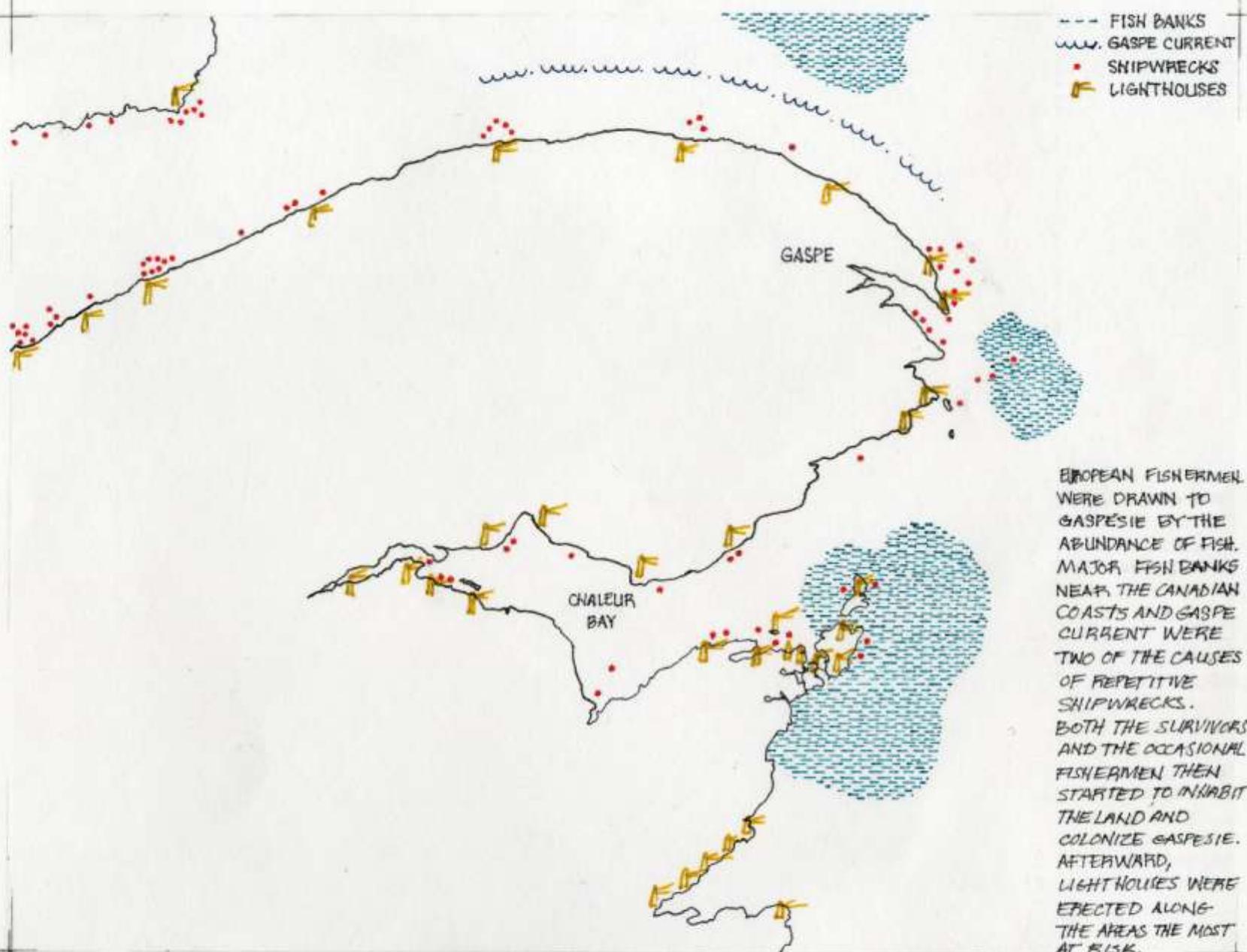
¹⁹ "Discover," Tourisme Gaspésie, last modified 2018, <https://www.tourisme-gaspesie.com/decouvrir/gaspesie.html>



Spring in Penouille, Gaspe bay

Home

May in Gaspé, the weather is getting warmer and the longing for fresh air is becoming stronger. The occupants are leaving the windows open more and more often. Spring gently comes in with its smells, its sounds, and its fresh air. The house is getting ready for the summer. The last of the snow is still melting. The colors are becoming brighter. The trees are starting to cover their branches, and the flowers are beginning to bloom. Streams are engorged by the liquefying ice. Trails are slippery with mud. Wilderness is waking. It is the season when everything seems to replenish itself. The home is renewing its connections with its surroundings, letting the outside coming in again.



- FISH BANKS
- ~~~~ GASPE CURRENT
- SHIPWRECKS
- ⌞ LIGHTHOUSES

EUROPEAN FISHERMEN WERE DRAWN TO GASPÉSIE BY THE ABUNDANCE OF FISH. MAJOR FISH BANKS NEAR THE CANADIAN COASTS AND GASPE CURRENT WERE TWO OF THE CAUSES OF REPETITIVE SHIPWRECKS. BOTH THE SURVIVORS AND THE OCCASIONAL FISHERMEN THEN STARTED TO INHABIT THE LAND AND COLONIZE GASPÉSIE. AFTERWARD, LIGHTHOUSES WERE ERECTED ALONG THE AREAS THE MOST AT RISK.

Colonisation of Gaspésie

Home is where we belong: where we feel comfort, where we feel wholesome and where we allow ourselves to let go. Home is, as Heidegger said, a house (a building) as a place to dwell (occupy).²⁰ With so many more layers, our place of residence, is a place of intimacy, of affective exchanges, and abandonment. "[L' habitat] est le lieu construit essentiellement en vue de préserver l'intimité [...] l'habitat correspond à la sphère le plus privée, [...] l'habitat est l'abri et l'habit."²¹ [Home is first and foremost the space of personal life; it corresponds to the most private sphere, the most intimate ... home as that private sphere is where habitat is both the shelter and the garment.]

In this case, it is a social place, a shared space, formed by this young family living together. It is their common space of being only that, a family at home. Evolving through time, as each member will get older, and the dwelling will follow the same pattern of life, changing shape and aging in its own way. It will be the witness, and part of the memory of its inhabitants. "Architecture's central role continues to be to provide a home, ultimately a place of fruition and completeness analogue to erotic experience, a place for dwelling."²² This home in Gaspé is where they will set roots, and create their own intimacy.

The architect's goal is to help them build these feelings through participation, to first create a connection with their home by being involved in the design process, and making sure the architectural decisions reflect their needs and personality. This requires paying attention to details, to clearly identify their needs: which space is the most important for them, and how can those spaces speak to each other. Planning the transitions from one room to another.

²⁰ Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Collins, 1971), 143-159.

²¹ Gustave-Nicolas Fischer, *Psychologie Sociale de l'Environnement* (Toulouse: Privat; St-Laurent, Québec: BO-PRÉ, 1992) 139-140.

²² Alberto Pérez-Gomez, *Attunement: Architecture Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2016), 7.

Creating an emotional dialogue, and eventually attachment to a house is the result of mitigations between the desires, and how to build them. How as designers we sensibly translate ideas into construct. "The design process is based on a constant interplay of feeling and reason. The feelings, preferences, longings, and desires that emerge and demand to be given a form must be controlled by critical powers of reasoning, but it is our feelings that tell us whether abstract considerations really ring true."²³ This is why these longings have to be properly addressed. They are key to the inhabitants association with their home.

Every choice in the design process should resonate with the family's aspirations. Such as the kitchen, which plays an important role because they love to cook. The act of sharing a meal with family and hosting friends is close to them. They need enough cabinets to put away their cookware and numerous plates, pots and pans. They must have enough counter space, for food preparation and serving. The dining room should be generous enough to host fifteen people when the extended family is visiting without giving the impression of being too spacious when only their small family is sitting at the table. They want the living room to feel warm and welcoming so they can retreat to it by the end of the night as much as they would by clement or squally days.

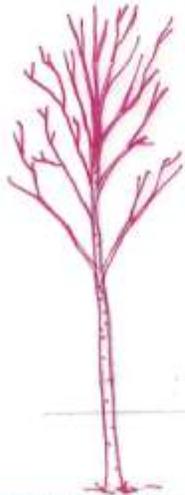
They need a study in prevision of the days that one of the adults requires or wants to stay at home to work. The bureau space should be bright, allowing enjoyment of the daylight while having to stay in and work. It should be close to the services (kitchen and washroom) for necessary breaks during the day. Being somewhat between the living areas and the sleeping zones,

²³ Peter Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture* (Basel, Switzerland: Birkhäuser, 2006), 21.

the home office has the opportunity to have both northern and southern exposure. A high window on the north side would let diffuse light in most of the day and a horizontal window on the bay side would allow a connection with the view as much as to keep track of the hours of the passing day. It ought to be near the quiet area so that there is a proximity to the children's bedroom in case of staying home due to a sick day.

There should be three bedrooms: a master bedroom, a children bedroom and a guest bedroom. When the kids will grow up they will have the opportunity to have their own separate bedroom while they are still young they can share one. Then, in later years the family may keep them as bedrooms, or transform one as a guest room, and the other as a library. The main washroom should be spacious enough to accommodate the whole family while it can as well be a place of withdrawal and peace. The secondary washroom is both a laundry room and a water cabinet, closer to the lively areas of the house.

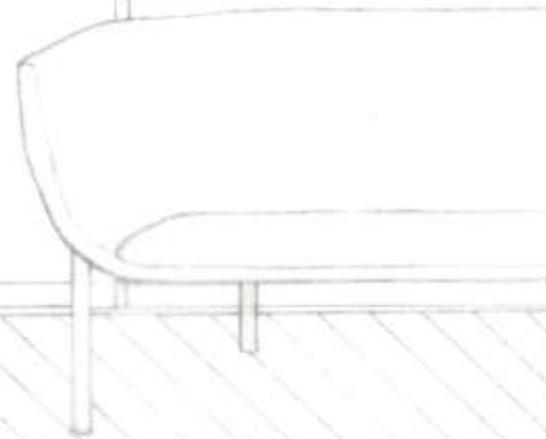
YOU CAN SEE SANDY BEACH AND DOUGLAS' MOUNTS ACROSS THE BAY. THE LIVING ROOM WINDOW CREATES A LINK WITH THE BACKYARD AND THE BAY.



BETULA Papyrifera
WHITE BIRCH HARDWOOD
FLOOR COMING FROM LOCAL SUPPLIER, ITS PALE GRAIN MAKES IT ALSO KNOWN AS PAPER BIRCH OR SILVER BIRCH AND IS COMMONLY FOUND IN THE AREA.



REFURBISHED LAMP AND COUCH.
THE RETRO FURNITURE AND PICTURES ARE FROM PERCE FLEA MARKET, ONE OF THE BIGGEST IN EASTPSE.
PROMOTES LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRADE.



CAP-AUX-OS

89KM

PERCE
CJR MARCHÉ AUX PUCES,
6 DE L'ÉGLISE,
BARACHOIS, QC

Living room

Belonging

"[T]he state of being in a very personal or private relationship, a sense of belonging." (Merriam-Webster)

June in Gaspé is enchanting. The days are long now, the weather is nice and temperate, and all you want to do is be surrounded by the beauty of it all. Looking at every sunrise and every sunset. Enjoying cool nights by the fire outside. Working on your garden and attending to the small sprouts. Caring for your land that is getting ready for another summer. The light makes the house warm and bright most of the day. In June, daylight lasts for almost sixteen hours. In the morning, when you wake up by the bay the light is diffused by colors, and those colors are stunning. You want to see that beauty inside your home; you want that splendour to be part of your everyday life. The blending of colors that the trees show through the kitchen window, going from the bright greens at the top to the warmth shades of the ground. This house, your home, makes you feel like it belongs there, like it is intricate to its landscape. It feels right as if it has been sitting there all along.

THE FIRST SIGN OF DAWN APPEARS OVER THE GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE.

○ IN THE SUMMER, MIDDAY SUN SHINES HIGH AT AN ANGLE OF 65°

THE SLOPE OF THE ROOF AND THE OVERHANG ALLOW JUST ENOUGH LIGHT FROM THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND WARM DAYS OF SUMMER AS WELL AS FROM THE COLDEST DAYS OF WINTER.

DUSK FALLS BEHIND GASPE LEAVING ONLY THE CITY LIGHTS ON.

○ IN THE WINTER, MIDDAY SUN SHINES AS LOW AS AN 48° ANGLE.

THE VIEW ON GASPE BAY ALLOWS YOU TO KEEP TRACK OF TIME ALL DAY FOLLOWING THE SUN FROM ITS FIRST LIGHT ON THE LEFT (EAST) TO ITS LAST ON THE RIGHT (WEST).

THE BOOKSHELVES AND DESK ARE MADE OF LOCAL MAPLE WOOD WHICH COLOR AND TEXTURE ARE GIVING RICHNESS AND CONTRAST TO THE SOFT SURFACE OF THE WALLS

THE STUDY IS SPACIOUS ENOUGH TO MEET WITH CLIENTS WHILE BEING INTIMATE ENOUGH TO WORK IN COMPLETE PRIVACY.

THE YELLOW BIRCH HARDWOOD FLOOR HAS A SUBTLE GRAIN, A GOOD STRENGTH, AND IS ONE OF THE MOST AVAILABLE SPECIES IN THE REGION.

Study

Belonging in a home is where, through participation and occupancy, one develops a sense of identity. At the 2017 World Design Summit in Montreal²⁴, at a conference under the theme *Design For Participation*, keynote Alejandro Aravena demonstrated this concept very well through his housing projects (Quinta Monroy, Villa Verde, and Entre Rios) for families in Chile. Delivering housing units with a structure that evolved through additions and modifications to their dwellings by the occupants themselves. Therefore, the owners created a sense of belonging, ownership and pride in their residence. Aravena described how the inhabitants formed an emotional bond with their space, how they conveyed a sense of territoriality when it came to their homes.

That emotional attachment develops because we relate to what we call home, "chez nous", our place. Home is where we create our own universe, and let all of our guards down. It is the built form that preserves intimacy. "Cet espace correspond à une sphère essentielle d'appropriation personnelle, [...] une spatialisation de l'identité."²⁵ [This space corresponds to a sphere of personal appropriation, ... a spatialization of identity.] We gain this sense of belonging through engaging in the creation of our personal quarters. And this urge to relate is strong because it is by bonding with a space that we make it our own, that we feel safe, that we feel at home. Even when we are dealing with uncharacteristic spaces, "...we manage to fashion places that

²⁴ 2017 World Design Summit, Palais des congrès, Montréal, (October 16-15, 2017).

²⁵ Gustave-Nicolas Fischer, *Psychologie Sociale de l'Environnement* (Toulouse: Privat; St-Laurent, Québec: BO-PRÉ, 1992) 140.

resonate positively with our aims; we transform even buildings that may in essence be no better than parking garages into cozy corners and appropriate environments, dressed with our memories and hopes."²⁶

In Gaspé, even newcomers may appear more Gaspesian than the Gaspesians themselves. When you decide to move to Gaspé, it generally comes from a powerful feeling, you fell in love with the region and you wanted to be part of it. You chose to be part of it. Belonging has therefore the potential to be imbedded in every detail of this house. It is why the participation of the occupants is so important. They are their home. It is a projection of them as built form. This is where, as an architect, we want to pay close attention to their story, their preoccupations, and their needs. Hence, we want to know how they project themselves living there.

That is why finishes and materials reflect not only an aesthetic, but their aesthetic. There, they will start to connect with their house, and build memories. As David Dernie and Jacopo Gaspari elegantly said in *Material imagination in architecture*, "Each of us brings memories and associations to the 'material encounter'."²⁷ By living in their home, this family will use the spaces, wear the floors and the walls, and leave traces. We like to see ourselves in what we make, and remember stories out of marks and carvings. These material encounters are the little chronicles of our homes.

²⁶ Alberto Pérez-Gomez, *Attunement: Architecture Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2016) 3.

²⁷ David Dernie and Jacopo Gaspari, *Material Imagination in Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2016) xi.

Wood is very present in the Gaspé region. The site of this house is located near Forillon National Park where it is possible to see a variety of trees, flora and fauna. Hence, to utilize wood in the context of this house is almost natural. The family want their home to reflect the presence and importance of wood. The way it relates to the site and the region. First in the structure of the walls and the roof, but in exposed surfaces as well. In the kitchen, the countertop has to be wood. From the constant movements of the food preparation to setting up plates, a hard wood counter is perfect. Some of the walls throughout the house can reflect that relationship while incorporating some acoustic elements too. Crafting one room after the other as a series of decisions that maintain and strengthen that sense of belonging to their home, and to their site.

BLOWN GLASS DROP
LAMPS FROM THE
WORKSHOPS GLASSWARE
MEDUSA SITUATED
ON THE MAGDALEN
ISLANDS IN THE GULF
OF SAINT LAWRENCE.

RECYCLED AND
REFURBISHED
BATHTUB WITH
CLAWFOOT

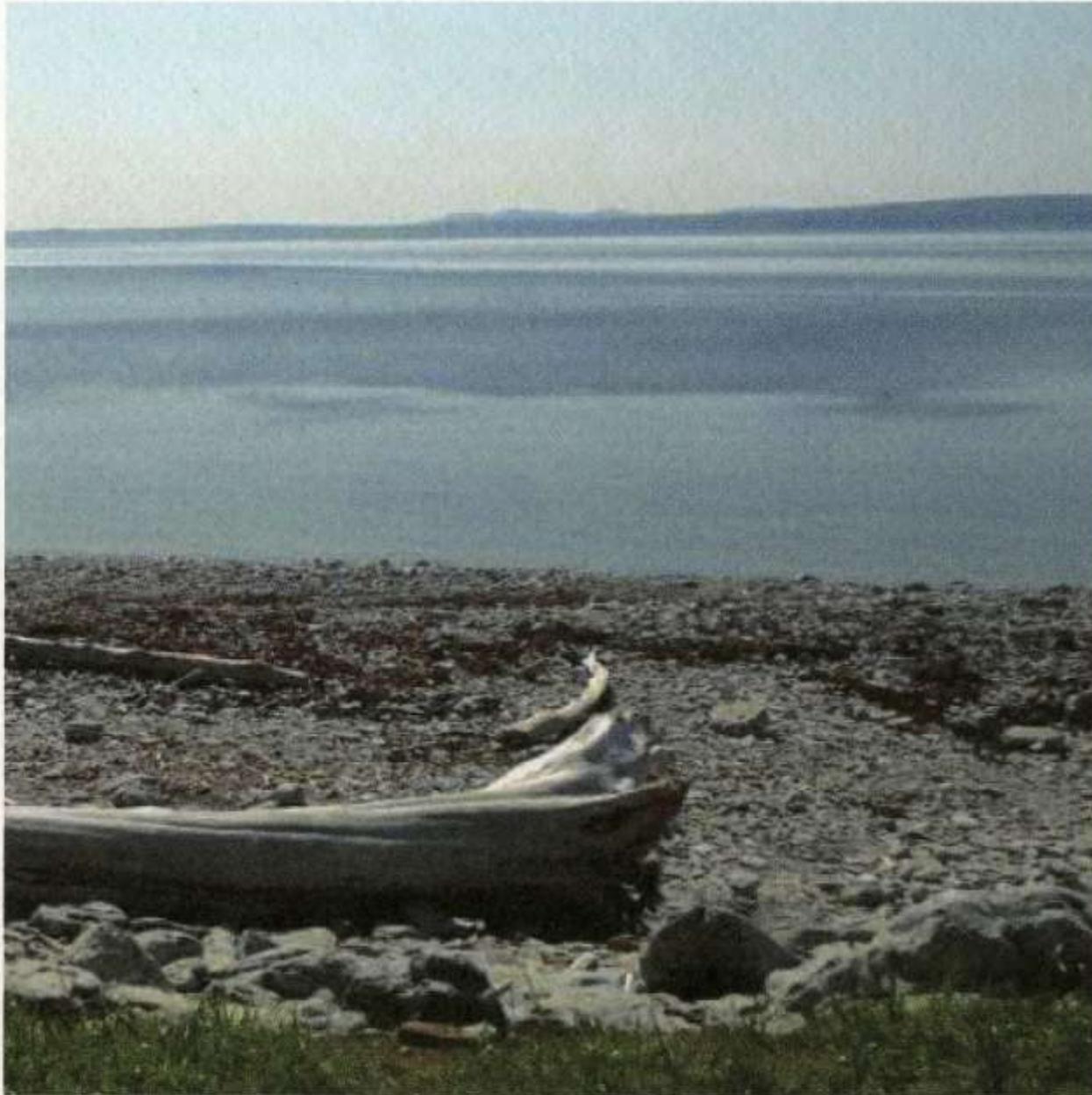
THE CLOSEST CERCLE DES FERMIERES DU QUÉBEC
IS LOCATED IN SAINT-MAJORIQUE, 20 KM FROM
CAP-AUX-OS (TO THE WEST) ON THE WAY TO GASPE,
AND IS A WOMAN BASED ORGANIZATION. SINCE 1915
THEY PROMOTE CULTURAL HERITAGE, WEAVING IS
ONE OF THEIR MOST KNOWN CRAFTS.

THE BATHROOM MAT IS MADE OF
WEAVED RECYCLED COTTON MADE BY
LOCAL ARTISANS.

Bathroom

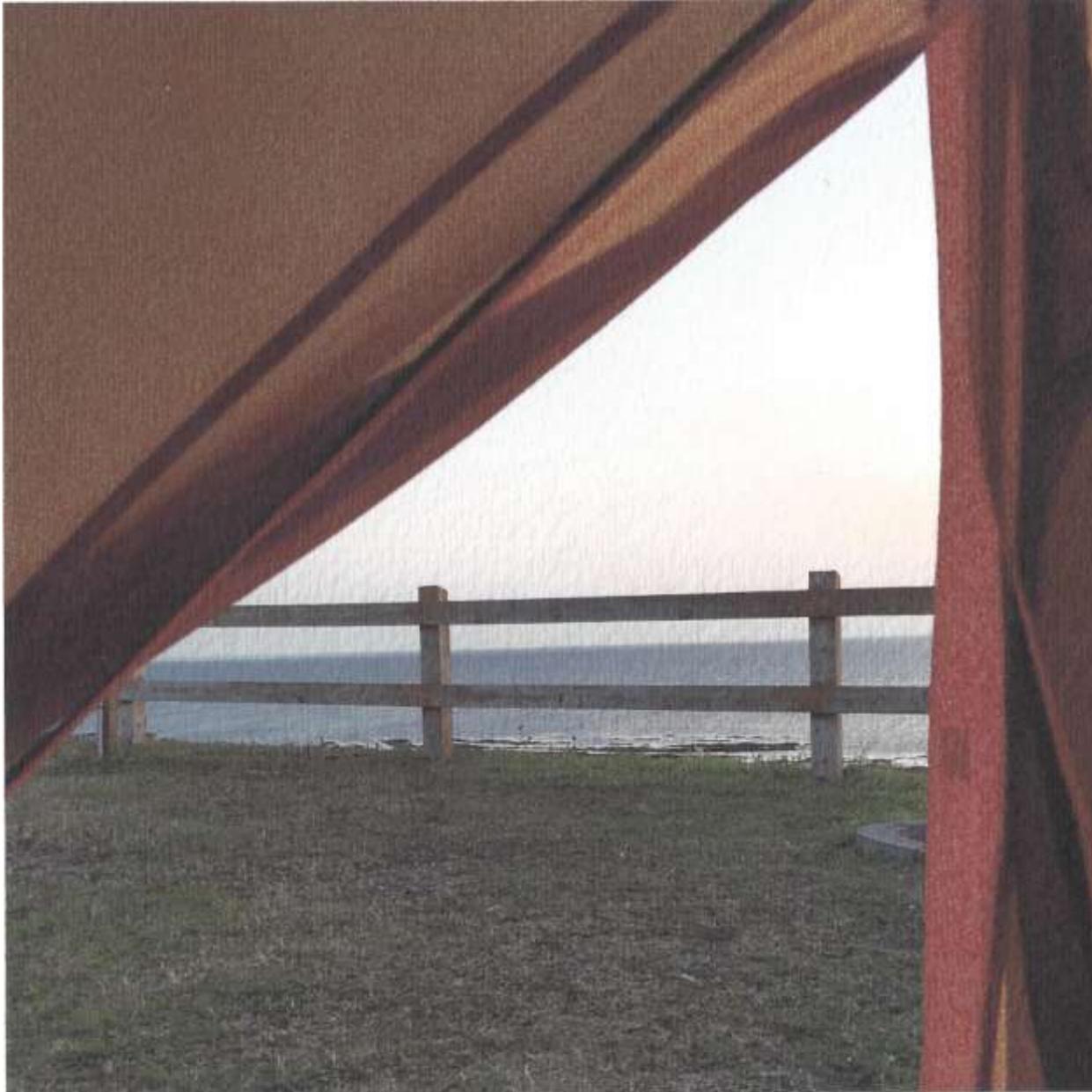
Three

Summer



Scale

July in Gaspé, the landscapes are breathtaking. Long days encourage the inhabitants to make the most out of summer. There is plenty to do outside, most of the local activities take place in July due to the beautiful weather: music festival, outdoor cinema, beaches parties, whale watching, kayaking, kiting, you name it! With such a bucolic landscape, it is without surprise that both locals and tourists want to enjoy the summer weather. The population grows exponentially when summer comes in Gaspé, tourism is a large part of the local economy, which makes it a great time to promote local products and culture. Gaspésians are proud of their local talents, and they are warm people, so if you take the time to listen they will tell you all about it. This month also coincide with moving in Quebec. The first of July is the provincial moving day, which occasions Gaspésians to take part in house warming parties, and outdoor dinners to enjoy the landscape. July is Gaspé at its most social and cultural. The region is teeming.



Summer camping in Gaspésie

Scale has dimension: height, width and depth of space or landscape within sight. These visual distances will influence our perception, and therefore our experience. Through our receptors, our body responds to the changes and stimuli inside the space that make us react in a certain way. When a ceiling is too low, we feel compressed; when a room is overly wide and high, we feel minuscule; and sometimes we enter a space that just feels right. It is a question of perceived scale, experienced by the inhabitants, and in relation to their body, which is not necessarily a question of absolute scale based on units, but an experience based on one's own size.

The human scale in this thesis is not as an extension nor an extrapolation of our proportions but rather how we live within scale. How we are affected by scale. Jan Gehl and Birgitte Svarre in *How to Study Public Life* investigate how environmental researchers, psychologists, and architects have explored and questioned the effects of built form on human's interaction over time. Showing his research notes, Gehl presents an abstract of one of his studies on human scale, perception, and the experience of distances called *Senses and Scale in Practice; Experiencing distances in an ordinary context* which was conducted between 1987 and 2010. Gehl says: "Personally experiencing spatial relationships and scales will always have the most useful impact. Once we begin to measure, gather and systematize our own observations and examples, concepts like human scale, human senses and need take on a more concrete meaning. They are no longer incorporated as an afterthought at the end of a project, but can naturally form the starting point for designing cities, buildings and public space for people."²⁸

²⁸ Jan Gehl and Birgitte Svarre. *How to Study Public Life* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2013) 108.

Through a more personal perspective, Prof. Zakia Hammouni was my Environmental Psychology professor at UQAM in 2009, and presented us number of studies in the context of health care units, institutional buildings and residential spaces. One that kept my attention was presenting scale as a sequence of designed events experienced by the occupants, circulating from a small corridor to a double height space, and how that last space felt oversized in comparison to the oppressive feeling of the seven-foot high (low) passage. That case study made me realize how much architects can affect a person's experience through design.

Paul Emmons wrote the article *Size Matters* published in *arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, which talks about the history of scale, and its relationship to architectural drawings. In the article he refers to scale as imaginative inhabitation through the ability of projection of oneself into space. Emmons says that: "empathetic bodily projection is critical to imagine a future edifice."²⁹ Scale is experience first through imagination in the design process and after in the built form.

The primary encounter with scale on Gaspe's site comes in the landscape. The almost endless perspectives of water and mountains over the bay give an impression of vastness to the occupants that are only broken by the presence of the trees. These trees create visual walls around the site and partial ceilings blocking in turn the sun or the rain. As designer, considering the interaction between the inhabitants and the landscape: how the vegetation creates depth and comes into interplay with the perspectives around the house, is equally part of the relationship with scale as the house itself.

²⁹ Paul Emmons, "Size matters: virtual scale and bodily imagination in architectural drawing." in *Architectural Research Quarterly*, Volume 9, Issue 3-4 (September 2005) 232.

The following encounter with scale is at the perimeters of the house. From a distance, and within the settings, what may seem like a small shelter becomes more defined as you get closer, and finally feel the scale of the house as you are standing on the front porch. Once inside, behind the exterior wall, the occupants are facing an enclosed series of spaces that are themselves enclosed within the first walls of trees, like Russian dolls. The house is an unfolded succession of various scales, translated as a migration through space. Each space has its definition, its dimensions, and its own scale that speaks to the members of the small family.



..... 1000 FT
--- 2000 FT
— 3000 FT

GASPESIE'S LAND IS COVERED AT 95 PERCENT BY FOREST OF THE NORTHERN TEMPERATE AND BOREAL ZONES, GOING FROM THE SEA LEVEL UP TO OVER 4000 FT. THE PRINCIPAL SPECIES ARE THE BALSAM FIR, WHITE BIRCH, YELLOW BIRCH, EASTERN WHITE CEDAR, WHITE SPRUCE, BLACK SPRUCE, MAPLE, LARCH, AND PINE.

↑ NORTH

Tree cover in Gaspésie

Material

August in Gaspé is hot and gorgeous. The colors are deep: the blue of the bay reaches indigo tones, the gray of the rocks turns to black when wet by the sea, the green of the leaves is luxuriant, every single thing seems saturated. You can feel the richness of the summer just by looking at the landscape. It is telling the story of the dryer days where some of the pine trees look burned by the sun through their already reddened thorns, or the one of the rainier days when there is abundance through the streams and rivers. It is all there surrounding the Gaspésians. The days are slowly starting to get shorter. Every night you can see a little difference in the light. You can start to feel that fall is approaching. The wind is becoming more present as are some additional rainy days. It is still, however, one of the best times of the season to go camping. The nights are neither too warm nor too cold. The sun radiantly wakes you up in the morning, and the hikes are splendid. While at home, the evenings on the patio, or by the water are simply exquisite. The breeze coming through the windows is renewing the air inside bringing milder nights.



Tree species

Material is a matter of sensation, experience and culture. In the built form, materials create an enclosure that comprehends its own atmosphere. "The prime virtue in materials is their ability to alter the climate, shaping a little environment within which architecture can be forgotten and life can go on."³⁰ Materials add to the poetic of the space, and are often native to its context.

The use of wood is a common practice in Gaspésie. Its availability and its durability have made wood one of the most popular material in the area. Ninety-five percent of the region is covered with forest which is greatly due to the Appalachian topography.³¹ In Gaspésie, the *Thuja Occidentalis* (Eastern White Cedar), black spruce, balsam fir and pine are some of the principal wood species used in house construction and in the boat industry. In the last century Gaspésie had three mills: Shaw Mill, St. Maurice Co., and York Lumber Co., and wood was the main industry throughout the winter.

Gaspésie, being a remote area in Quebec, means other materials such as concrete are very expensive. Brick construction are present but not as dominant as in other more urban areas of Quebec. Claddings (wood shingles, timber, and panels) are the most current techniques when it come to exterior walls in the Gaspésie. Wood is largely used for pre-fabrication, new construction, and restoration. Consequently, as it was true in the past it is still true today that wood in the region plays a very important role.

³⁰ Henry Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture* (Philadelphia, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000) 29.

³¹ C. Poirier, "Portrait territorial - Gaspésie - Îles-de-la-Madeleine," Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la faune, 2006, <https://www.mern.gouv.qc.ca/publications/territoire/planification/portrait-gaspesie.pdf>

David Dernie and Jacopo Gaspari in *Material Imagination in Architecture* explain how our means and use of material is often if not constantly subjective to both our physical and our historical experience. Moreover, that we also employ materials because of the memories we have of them, or what we associate them with. "The physical material is never an isolated thing: it always exists with relationship to its cultural and physical context, history and practices of making, and with respect to interpretation, that will always be personal."³²

Material in this house is more than the wooden structure, the concrete of the foundations, the glass of the windows, or the paint on the walls. Material is cultural to the region as much as it is to this little family. Richard Sennett in *The Craftsman* writes about the ability of people to learn about who they are through making and that material culture matters because material echoes social, economic and religious convictions in place and time. "Materially, humans are skilled makers of a place for themselves in the world."³³ In the house, materials reflects both the region and the owner.

As Gaspesians and as primary occupants, which texture they choose, which color, and which finish are all physical representations of the inhabitants themselves, and of their personality within space. Materials are deeply poetic to the physical composition that is articulated through their aesthetic. They have the potential to be strong when they look frail or to be soft when they are hard. This duality adds to the richness of the materials.

³² David Dernie and Jacopo Gaspari, *Material Imagination in Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2016) xi.

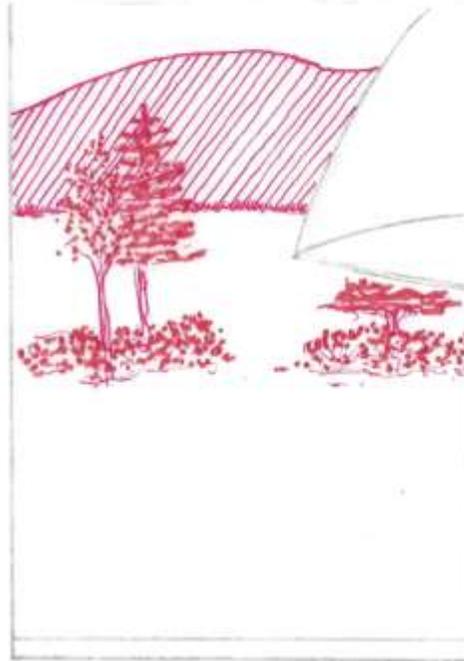
³³ Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) 13.

David Pye phrased that idea while talking about flesh and draperies sculpted in hard stone: "Much of the pleasure these things give us comes from the very fact of 'soft' properties being expressed in a hard material to which they are quite foreign."³⁴ The opposite gives that same satisfaction, when realizing the softness of a material that looks rough but is not to the touch. The stone of the chimney looks cold and coarse, but is in fact the warmest place. The hard surfaces of the floor are hiding an underlying heating system that is soft to the feet. The contradiction translated in the material is what is so attractive and have potential for deeper meaning. "Architecture is a material thing."³⁵

³⁴ David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* (Bethel, Connecticut: Cambium Press, 1995) 88.

³⁵ David Dernie and Jacopo Gaspari, *Material Imagination in Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2016) xi.

THE SMALL WINDOW HAS THE NORTHERN VIEW OF THE SITE WHICH GIVES ON THE MOUNTAINS, THE FRONT YARD, AND UP THE PATH TO THE ROAD.

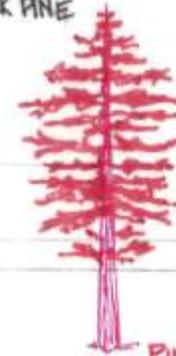


VINTAGE INDUSTRIAL LAMP FROM LOCAL SPRING 'BARN SALE' THAT TAKES PLACE EVERY YEAR ONCE THE WEATHER IS WARM ENOUGH. REFURNISHED, WITH A MORE CONTEMPORARY FINISH AND SUSPENSION SYSTEM.

BOTH THE BANQUET AND THE KITCHEN TABLE ARE MADE OF WOOD FROM GASPE. THE TABLE IS MADE OF TREMBLING ASPEN AND THE BENCH IS MADE OF JACK PINE.



POPULUS TREMULOIDE



PINUS BANKSIANA

Kitchen

Qualities

September in Gaspé the water is cold, but the sun is still warm. It is the end of summer, the nights are cooler, and you can feel the air change as the sun is starting to set. The colors range in a series of profound shades. The locals are yet enjoying the most of everything: the good days are allowing for both inside and outside playtime. The cooler air of the evenings allows you to appreciate the mountains even more, the wood canopies are abundant which allows for pleasant hikes, and when the sun gets lower then it shines through the tree trunks showing you a way out before disappearing for the night. The wind by the bay is getting chilly. You will want a blanket by the fire to enjoy the end of the evening. Being at home is both being indoors and outdoors in Gaspé.

THIS CONNECTION TOWARDS THE DECK IS FACING GASPE BAY, THE BACKYARD, AND THE FIRE PIT. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL, THE HOUSE FIREPLACE'S HEAT HELPS TO KEEP THE TRANSITION FROM THE EXTERIOR TO THE INTERIOR WARM AND DRY.

THE CHANGE OF SEASON IMPLIES A LOT OF LAYERS: WINDBREAKERS, RAINCOATS, RUBBER BOOTS, HATS AND SCARVES. THE WARDROBE ENTRANCE HAS TO BE ROOMY AND HAS TO HAVE SUBDIVISIONS TO FACILITATE STORAGE.

THE WARDROBE HALLWAY IS THE TRANSITION INTO THE HOUSE, IT IS THE DRESSING ROOM BEFORE HEADING OUT TO PLAY OUTSIDE, AND IT IS WHERE ONE CAN FIND LOST KEYS OR TOYS.

THE CLOSET ALSO CONTAINS DEDICATED SPACE FOR ALL THE EQUIPMENT THAT THE FAMILY USES FOR SPORTS AND RECREATION.

Wardrobe entrance

The qualities of a space are expressed through physical and atmospheric experiences. Through the process of design, we create sensations. The scale is one in a set of relational experiences, the material in another. "The truth is that what we want to do is not to express the properties of materials, but to express their qualities."³⁶ We want to read the subtleties of the material we choose through their poetic: what they bring emotionally to a space, how it makes a peculiar moment in a house enjoyable. For example, natural light and its colors are of great influence on psychosomatic experience of place³⁷. It is *mettre en scène* (staging) the space, creating tension, playing with light, orientation, scale and time.

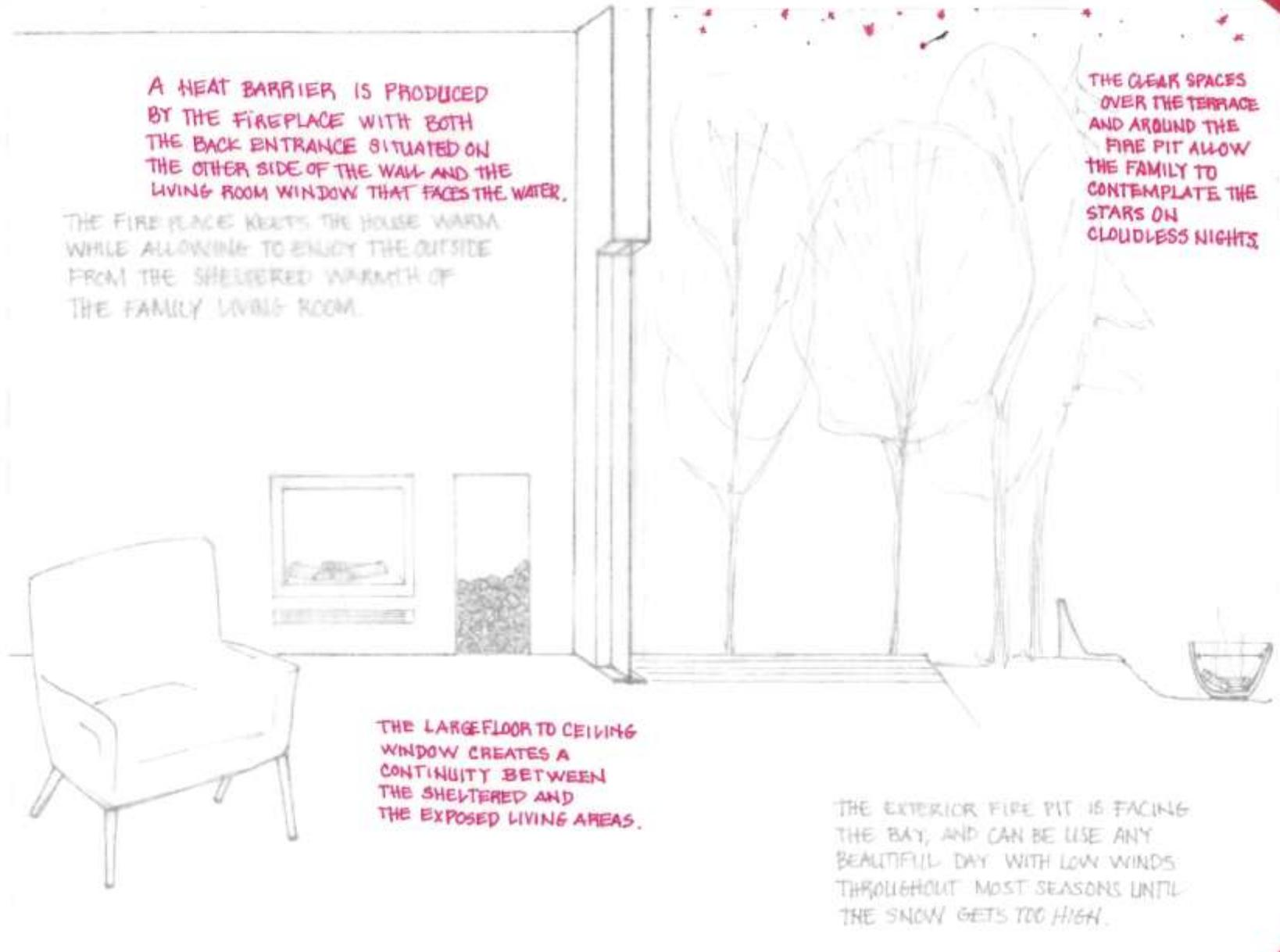
We are "designing scenery"³⁸ as Pye said in *The Nature and Aesthetic of Design*, although, design is more than beauty and aesthetics. Creating spaces for habitation is not only projecting images as visual arts, it is the creativity, the efficiency, and the art in problem solving. Qualities are embedded in the design process. They are in the small things: finding the right position on site, orienting the house in the good angle, refinements in the choice of materials, in the acoustic, in the admittance of natural light, in the means of natural ventilation, in the disposition of passive heating, in all the subtleties of the systems that are hidden under the skins, but make the whole work as one. Constructed environments are often compared to the body due to its own system, but also because of the beauty in the complexities of how the body functions by itself. As architects, we aspire to achieve systems that are discrete and functional while being aesthetic and accentuating enjoyment of the house.

³⁶ David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* (Bethel, Connecticut: Cambium Press, 1995) 88.

³⁷ Küller, Rikard & Ballal, Seifeddin & Laike, Thorbjörn & Mikellides, Byron & Tonello, Graciela. (2006). "The impact of light and colour on psychological mood: A cross-cultural study of indoor work environments" in *Ergonomics*. 49. 1496-507. 10.1080/00140130600858142.

³⁸ David Pye, *The Nature and Aesthetic of Design* (London: Barrie and Jenkins Ltd., 1978) 93.

On site, the sun mainly faces the southern side of the house, rising over the Gulf of St. Lawrence, shining bright over Douglas Town across the bay at mid-day and setting behind Gaspé in the evening. Therefore, the bay side is the most favourable for natural light and solar heat gain. Every move in the design process has to be a meticulous one. The sun has to come in during the winter but prevent overheating in the summer. There should be windows that allow for both the view and natural light. This is when sun shutters and roof extensions come into play. On the opposite side of the site the winds come from the Northwest. The north side of the house acts as its shield, being the least open, hence protecting the inhabitants from the inclement weather. While having the smallest amount of openings, the Northern light is a diffuse one, and letting some in would be agreeable and allow for additional soft natural daylight throughout the day. Therefore, the detail of the back wall has to be of great insulation without being oppressing. Each decision will manipulate the qualities of the space created.



A HEAT BARRIER IS PRODUCED BY THE FIREPLACE WITH BOTH THE BACK ENTRANCE SITUATED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL AND THE LIVING ROOM WINDOW THAT FACES THE WATER.

THE FIRE PLACE KEEPS THE HOUSE WARM WHILE ALLOWING TO ENJOY THE OUTSIDE FROM THE SHELTERED WARMTH OF THE FAMILY LIVING ROOM.

THE CLEAR SPACES OVER THE TERRACE AND AROUND THE FIRE PIT ALLOW THE FAMILY TO CONTEMPLATE THE STARS ON CLOUDLESS NIGHTS.

THE LARGE FLOOR TO CEILING WINDOW CREATES A CONTINUITY BETWEEN THE SHELTERED AND THE EXPOSED LIVING AREAS.

THE EXTERIOR FIRE PIT IS FACING THE BAY, AND CAN BE USE ANY BEAUTIFUL DAY WITH LOW WINDS THROUGHOUT MOST SEASONS UNTIL THE SNOW GETS TOO HIGH.

Fire place and fire pit

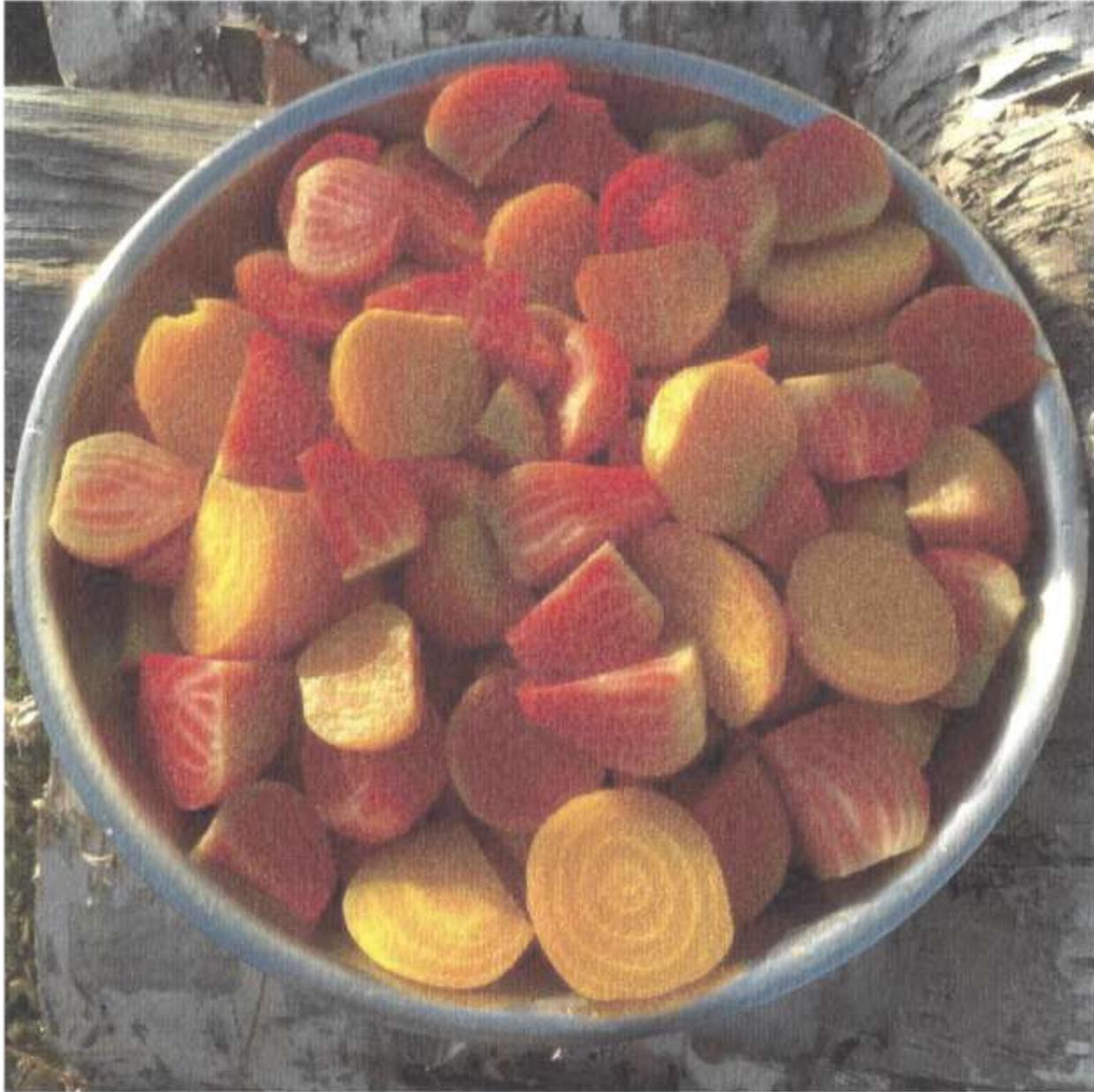
Four

Fall



Poetic

October in Gaspé the weather is reaching lower points on the thermometer, and the landscape is filling with colors. The once green leaves of the trees are now mixed with tones of yellow, ochre, and red. Going hiking in this weather is a whole other experience. The views are getting less covered each day that passes. The landscapes feel completely changed. The bay is reflecting more and more silver tones, giving the impression that the snow is already here, and making sure that we are aware of its ice-cold temperature. The winds and waves are reaching higher points. The seal families are starting to hide a little more. The small family is settling in, preparing for the upcoming colder days. Consequently, the relationship between the inside and the outside is becoming more visual: the windows stay close most of the time keeping the warmth in, accentuating contemplation instead of physical activities. The occupants can still enjoy both indoor and outdoor environment equally, but the need of an extra layer is manifest.



Fall late harvest - beets

The way we build, in prose, in a sequence, through flux or duality is what reaches into a deeper meaning in architecture. In making built form, we narrate space. We create potential for appropriation, occupancy and memory. The methods we use are cultural, they are tainted by who we are, where we are and what we know. We either perpetuate, or alter our culture through dwelling. The poetic is embedded in the process and the qualities. One that is often present is Gaspé is duality.

Duality is as present in the extreme weather as in the topography of the region. The appearance of precariousness is what makes it safe. Building a home has to be a question of poetic by the relationships that will be created. Gehl says this beautifully when talking about comfort and the physical form, "we sit on the edge of spaces."³⁹ We appropriate precariousness and make it comforting. Even if wood might seem fragile, wood structure have been standing and fighting against inclement weather for decades. The duality in these choices is where poetic lies. In this case it is soft materials with strong abilities.

Another appealing contrast is the depth of surfaces in Gaspé. The ground is composed of sedimentary layers that were tipped over by tectonic forces that created the peculiar aspect of the cliffs in the area. These layers are visible from the beaches, looking up at the imposing height and weight of these rocks. This same ground is where the house sets its foundations. Where the family initiates the building of their home. There is a softness to them in their beauty and in their history. This contrast, that lies within the skin of the earth in Gaspésie, was conversely articulated by Paul Valéry while referring to the body as: "the skin

³⁹ 2017 World Design Summit, Palais des congrès, Montréal, (October 16-15, 2017).

is the deepest"⁴⁰ and which Alicia Imperiale extrapolated to "surface of maximum interface and intensity."⁴¹ There is a strength and a contradiction present in Gaspé's soil. Gaspé is a nest of dualities in its qualities which feed the poetic of the space.

⁴⁰ Paul Valéry, *Oeuvres, tome II* (Paris: Pléiade, Gallimard 1932) 215-216.

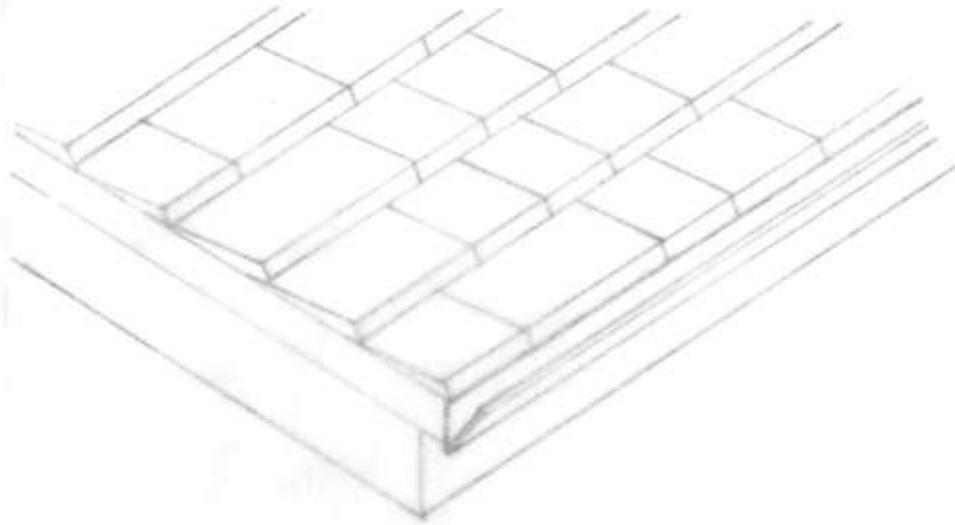
⁴¹ Alicia Imperiale, *New Flatness* (Basel: Birkhauser, 2000) 5.



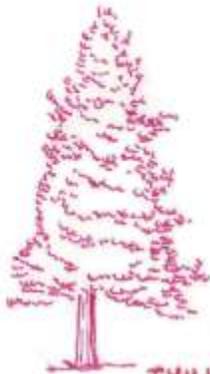
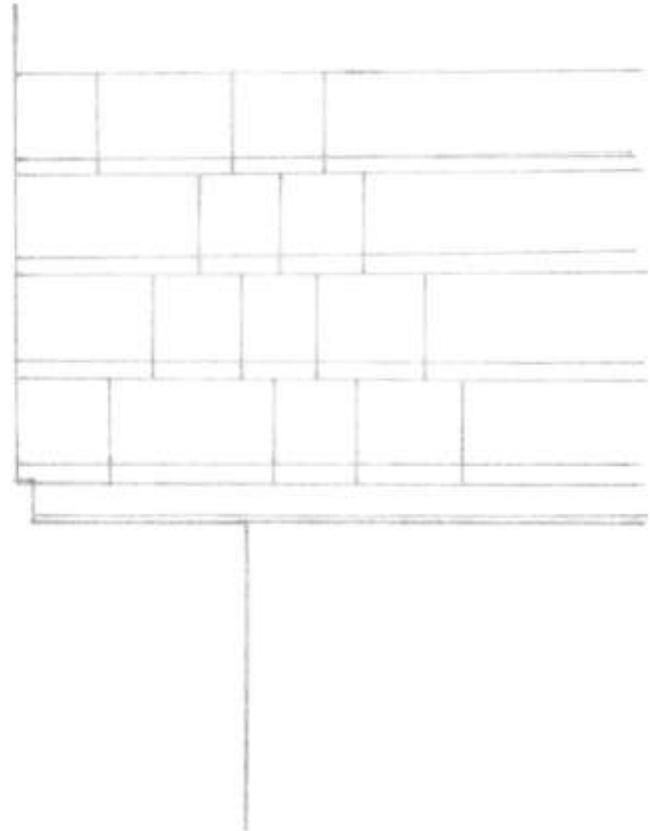
Fall in Penouille - Gaspé Bay

Dialogue

November in Gaspé the weather is getting cold, and the landscape is filled with more subtle tones. The windows stay close most of the time, keeping the heat in. The occupants' environment is translated to the comfort and warmth of the home which is winning over the cold and humid air of the outdoors. Everything slowly enters in transition from fall to winter. The last leaves are falling from the trees, and they are being brush away by the wind. The smells around the house and on the trails are more earthy. The colors are fading, becoming less chromatic, the yellow of the tall grass blends with the brown tones of the sand and the earth. The whales and seals have left the water of the Bay. The sky is still vibrant shades of blues from sunrise to sunset, but the days are at their shortest; after 3:30 pm it is already night time. The Gaspésians will soon mainly occupy the indoors. The dialogue with the build is at its strongest.



EASTERN WHITE CEDAR IS USED FOR SHINGLE ROOFING DUE TO ITS DURABILITY AND ITS AVAILABILITY IN GASPE'S REGION.



THUJA OCCIDENTALIS

CEDAR SHINGLE ROOF BOARDS AND ANGLE STEEL PROFILE GUTTER

Roof Detail

Dialogue occurs in our home, a place of exchange and relationship, between the occupants, and among the build form and its inhabitant. A family house is a theater of interactions, appropriations, and recognition. As beings we acclimate ourselves, we adapt to our surroundings, and adaptation is a responsive behavior as well as an innate one. In order to be happy, we create a dialogue with space. We become part of it; it is an ongoing exchange between the occupants and the construct.

Lars Spuybroek, in *Machining Architecture*, questions how behavior, habit, and desire are colliding with the design, and how geometry and life can be sensed in the architecture itself. "We shouldn't separate building materials too much from our bodies; walls experience the architecture just as much as we do. We are the contracting diagram, a 'sense datum', continuing the present in space."⁴² Furthermore, through being in space, through movement and actions: touching, sitting, walking, and playing we are part of everything and everything is a part of us. Through our actions, living in a space, we alter it and it alters us.

We, as human beings, are makers, designers, and builders. In their house, the little family enters in dialogue with the architecture in their own way. One shapes its own environment and into that same environment another modifies it again to his or her image and so on. That contextual space becomes an addition of multiple type of occupancy through each inhabitant. That sequence is the dialogue we make in influencing built form with our every action. As Tony Fry said, "becoming human is

⁴² Lars Spuybroek, "Machining Architecture" in *The weight of the image*, 4th International NAI Summer Master Class (August 1999) 17.

an appropriative event, ... in our making of our self (me), we equally make a world around us (my world) that collectively end up making us."⁴³ The dialogue is both in the action as much as it is in the reaction.

Dialogue in the design process is also learning and harvesting from previous architecture, from vernacular, the intelligence of the regional culture is revisited in this contemporary family home. Traditional technique is noticeable through the deep eaves, the thickness of the north wall, the proportion of the windows that let the view and light penetrate, and the hard wood the floor. Whereas incorporating contemporary solutions as triple glaze windows on the northern side, engineered wood in the structure and heated floors under the hard surfaces. Available materials and techniques are part of the dialogue of the architect in order to build their house. The dialogue is essential between the designer and the family to represent their hopes and needs into construct. It is an ongoing exchange that extends from the beginning to the end of the project.

Inside their home, "the relationship between [the family] and space is none other than dwelling."⁴⁴ Building is dwelling is Being; we are our home. Or as Arendt expressed in the *Human Condition* when talking about Being in the world and Being of the world⁴⁵, we are both made by the world and world-makers. We dialogue with space through use. The family using space through time creates memories and these memories become another layer of dialogue. They are memories that we can tell and memories that we can see in the material change, in the alteration of spaces and in the aging of the house.

⁴³ Tony Fry, *Becoming Human by Design* (New York: Berg, 2012) 40.

⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Collins, 1971), 155.

⁴⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1958) 50-54.

Dialogue has stratum. These multiple layers are the witnesses of human occupancy. These traces are our personal history with the house and are part of our sense of belonging.

A hand-drawn architectural sketch of a window sill. The drawing shows a perspective view of a room with a large window. The window sill is a long, low wooden structure. On the sill, there are two books. The window looks out onto a landscape with several trees. The drawing is annotated with several paragraphs of text in red ink, explaining the design choices and the local climate. The text is written in a casual, handwritten style. The drawing is held in place by four red corner tabs.

GASPE HAS A PECULIAR WIND REGIME. PREVAILING WINDS ARE FROM THE NORTH-NORTH-WEST, BUT THERE ARE ALSO THERMAL BREEZES DUE TO THE BAY WHICH CAN BE ADDED TO THE SYNOPTIC WINDS AND THE KATABATIC WINDS FROM THE APPALACHIANS.

THE WESTERN WINDOW GIVES A VIEW OF THE SURROUNDING TREES ON SITE. THE SUNSET TAKES PLACE BEHIND THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS WHICH MAKES IT A PERFECT PLACE TO WITNESS THE TRANSITION OF THE DAY INTO THE EVENING.

THIS SIDE OF THE HOUSE HAS NATURAL DIFFUSE LIGHT, WHICH MAKES READING AND PLAYING INSIDE POSSIBLE WITHOUT ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING THROUGHOUT THE DAY.

THEREFORE, TO HAVE A LARGE WINDOW ALSO MEANS TO HAVE TRIPLE PANE OR EXTERIOR SHUTTERS.

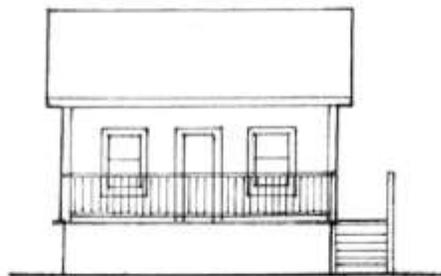
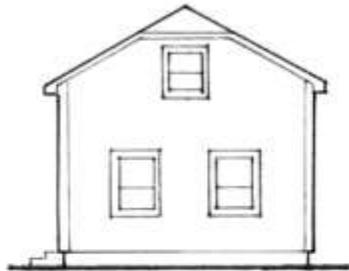
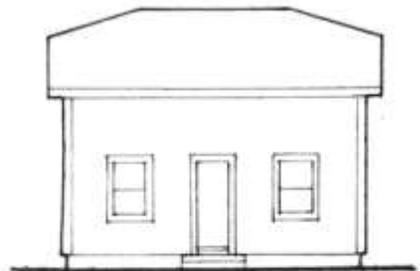
THE WINDOW SILL WOODEN SEAT HAS A HIDDEN HEAT SOURCE THAT KEEPS THE LEDGE WARM WHICH MAKES IT MORE ENJOYABLE TO SIT ON BY COLDER DAYS.

SOFTER SURFACES AND MATERIALS ALLOW FOR LESS REVERBERATION AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMFORT OF THE FAMILY.

Window Sill

Happiness

December in Gaspé the temperature is hanging around zero degrees Celsius on the mercury line. By then you can feel the strength of winter taking over. This time of year the bay is magical, the air is crisp, the wind is strong, and the ground is already well covered in snow. The light from a sunny day is very bright, and makes everything in shades of silver light blue until sunset when an orange filter adds warmth to every surface it touches. On a cloudy day, the light is diffused; it is like being inside a cloud. The air seems thicker, and the whole landscape is a little blurred by the grey sky. Nature is made of pastel shades. This is a moment of the year that you enjoy being warm inside as much as playing outside. The relationship with the beauty of the surrounding nature is there, coming inside through the ledge of the window, warming the space and blending the space into one.



House typologies in Cap-Aux-Os

My goal in architecture is to create a space where our conscious self feels wholesome, content and fulfilled. Happiness, I am conscious, is very personal. Through this thesis, I aimed to develop a design process that through each vignette would meet criteria that each adds toward a house that brings happiness. Our happiness is determined and affected by numerous factors. I can only work on the physical ones, the built form. I am trying to offer a place of abandon, our very own sanctuary. Having a home where we can be ourselves, at ease, and release is important because, "our feelings always coemerge with the rest of our body consciousness in perception."⁴⁶ In other words, our well being is directly related to how we are in space.

Therefore, building toward architectural aspects that answer our needs, and reflect who we are will influence our happiness, and should be considered as one significant facet of the design process. It might be in the small things like fixtures: the door handle, the dining room lamp, materials: the wooden balustrade of the stair, the bookshelf in the library, or in the detail of the ledge at the entrance of a house, as much as in the addition of a sequence of choices like the disposition order of certain spaces at a specific scale that make this house your home. Happiness is not easy to establish or to define precisely, and in the context of this exploration is an aspiration that the design process intimately meets the family personality and desires. At the end of *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, Henri Lefebvre wrote: "Architecture and architectural effect and the production of space do not have enjoyment as their goal [...] they allow it, lead to it, prepare it."⁴⁷ As architect we are not

⁴⁶ Alberto Pérez-Gomez, *Attunement: Architecture Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2016) 1.

⁴⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2014) 151.

fabricating happiness but we can thrive to create a context that is pleasant and agreeable and favours enjoyment, leisure and pleasure.

Happiness in Gaspé's context is answering to the qualities of the landscape in regards to the family. Where do they want to play? What is the extent of the back patio? How can the path to the beach build a poetic that speaks to the sounds and the plants? Where are the visual openings? Where do they want to be covered or hidden by the trees, and which materials integrate with the nature and the aesthetic of the house?

Inside the house, happiness for this small family is having a nice space to cook together, having personal spaces where one can retreat when the need comes, having common space where exchange and play feels natural, a study that allows for work without feeling at work, and washroom that can either be for relaxing as a couple or playing battleship in the bath with the kids. The design of space in these terms is therefore to create opportunities for delightful experiences, on a day-to-day basis in the life of this small family. Or as Lefebvre skilfully writes: "What is specific to my case is that, from the outset, I know what I am looking for: not happiness, or delight, or joy, or sensuality, but the place where I would like to experience them, the place where I can linger in one of those felicitous encounters."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2014) 32.



Triptych

Conclusion

My investigation, like the one of Alberto Pérez-Gomez in *Attunement: Architecture Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science*, was a proposal for an architecture of well-being, and my exploration, in many regards, was as personal as Peter Zumthor's in *Thinking Architecture*. Finally, my journey lead me to find a junction where Heidegger and Lefebvre meet, building is a mean (Heidegger), architecture can intend to be a place that convey happiness (Lefebvre) and in this home the family dwells.

The twelve vignettes were developed as an alternative method to explore the architectural design process. Throughout the evolution of this thesis, each lens was subject to change, or able to move in time, and in seasons. These were developed keeping in mind that it was a project for a small family in Gaspé. In a different context, with a different client, at a different scale the vignettes could be altered or the time frame shifted. The themes, and the number, are prone to evolve. The same design process would have a another output with social housing or multiple unit apartment buildings. It would be interesting to explore a similar process for institutional buildings such as schools, elderly housing, or health care, or to explore the method of vignettes through commercial programs such as restaurants, cafe, or an outdoor equipment store. How the vignette would be deploy would be contextual to the author, users, and owners of the site.

There was no predetermined hierarchy in the themes, the vignettes were explored on an equal basis. Similarly to traditional design process, the context was first assessed, then the site and the building. The lenses are not a final lexicon, they are a part of my personal experience with the architectural design process. The premises of my research on dwelling in Gaspé. They are contextual, they are not common but definitely share similarities with sites in similar conditions, and therefore can serve as a base for investigation. The thesis research catalogues through cartography various conditions of the site and contains a brief anthropological research of Gaspé area. These means played an important role in understanding vernacular architecture. My study was enriched by what I learned from local traditions, and helped me reflect on more sustainable ways of building locally for the future with contemporary methods and materials.

This thesis was successful in making me see the architectural design process through an experimental method. The research evolved and changed throughout the whole process from beginning to the end, but I was able to explore the subject of single family housing in a remote region and its development. I studied dialogue and occupancy while keeping in mind that I wanted to explore the human aspect of architecture. The outcome of the twelve vignettes in four months was a good start, it both helped and restrained the investigation. This method helped in directing my focus and creating an order in a timely manner. This technique restrained through its rigor, its consistency in the amount of theme inside a fixed period. If I had to do it all again, knowing what I know about this process, I would keep the principle of theme vignettes that apply to a specific project, but be more lenient with the lenses per time frame. It is an ongoing journey that I will try to bring with me into practice.



Nature Morte

Epilogue

This thesis undertook slight turns and trajectories. At the first colloquium, studies on social housing and their impact on the quality of life, behavior and the sense of belonging were presented. The objective was to understand the effects of housing at various scales, from large-scale projects to family housing, on its inhabitants. The case studies were situated in North America mainly with some in Europe and South America. Following this, the thesis orientation as well as its scope needed to be more assertive and more precisely defined.

At the second Colloquium, the intent was to describe the trajectory and themes of this alternate design process as well as to understand what needed to be clarified. Only four of the twelve vignettes were presented, one in each season. The order of the vignettes was not yet final, and therefore still subject to change. The representation of each theme, and the overall depiction of the thesis were still exploratory. The work of Robert Mellin was brought up as an architect who studied, and wrote about the traditions and vernacular architecture on the Canadian east coast.

By the third Colloquium, the goal was to present the evolution of the thesis themes since December, and identify which aspect necessitated more attention or definition. Keeping in mind that this was the last presentation before defense, the recommendation on both the visuals and the design process were key. This subject has still lots of questions to answer and as I will move into practice, I hope to continue exploring with sensitivity how I approach architecture.

Through the duration of this thesis, my knowledge of architecture and more specifically of vernacular architecture and regional architecture was enriched by both my research and the exchanges I had with my peers. I have learned that my interest as a future intern in architecture is really focused on a series of relationship and dialogue between the client and the context. I hope to keep exploring this design process through practice.

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