

Place des Montréalaises

Our proposal for a new destination square offers an interface between the newer parts of the city and Old Town Montréal. Place des Montréalaises becomes a constantly evolving space for artistic display, a key pedestrian connection and accommodates a plethora of new uses that seamlessly stitch these two parts of the urban fabric together and overcome the severance caused by the Ville-Marie Expressway. The new square is adaptable and flexible to support the transport interchange and a range of activities from play to exhibition and performance. The elasticity of the design accommodates multiple rhythms of fast and slow use in a landscape of varying levels, widths, apertures, hard and soft surfaces. We propose that Place des Montréalaises can become a collaborative platform that invites participation from an international community, focused by the local energy of the resident women of the arts.

A sculpted lightweight deck above the Saint-Antoine access ramp and expressway smooths the disconnection created by level changes and offers a programmable space: a new plinth is created. The design embraces the existing Champs-de-Mars station and Marcelle Ferron's Vitrail (1968), seeking to enhance and expand this civic space. The approach to the station from the pedestrian footbridge is broadened to emphasise its function as both a transport link and site of social connection. As a marker at the end of the approach the station becomes a canvas for Ferron's artwork enhancing its role as a welcoming pivot point connecting the square with the wider city. Shaping the adjacent public space for use as an outdoor sculpture gallery with multiple arenas for performance brings a programme of permanent and temporary installations by women artists and the potential collaboration with local cultural institutions such as the Musée d'Art Contemporain (MAC). Our proposal commemorates the life of Marie-Joseph Angélique as a symbol of black resistance and liberation and other women significant to the identity of the city by inscribing their names and associated themes in the paved surface of the bridge. On the opposite side of the site in counterbalance to the station is a subterranean art gallery offering a café, storage, cycle repair facilities and flexible programmable space that will become a destination in its own right.

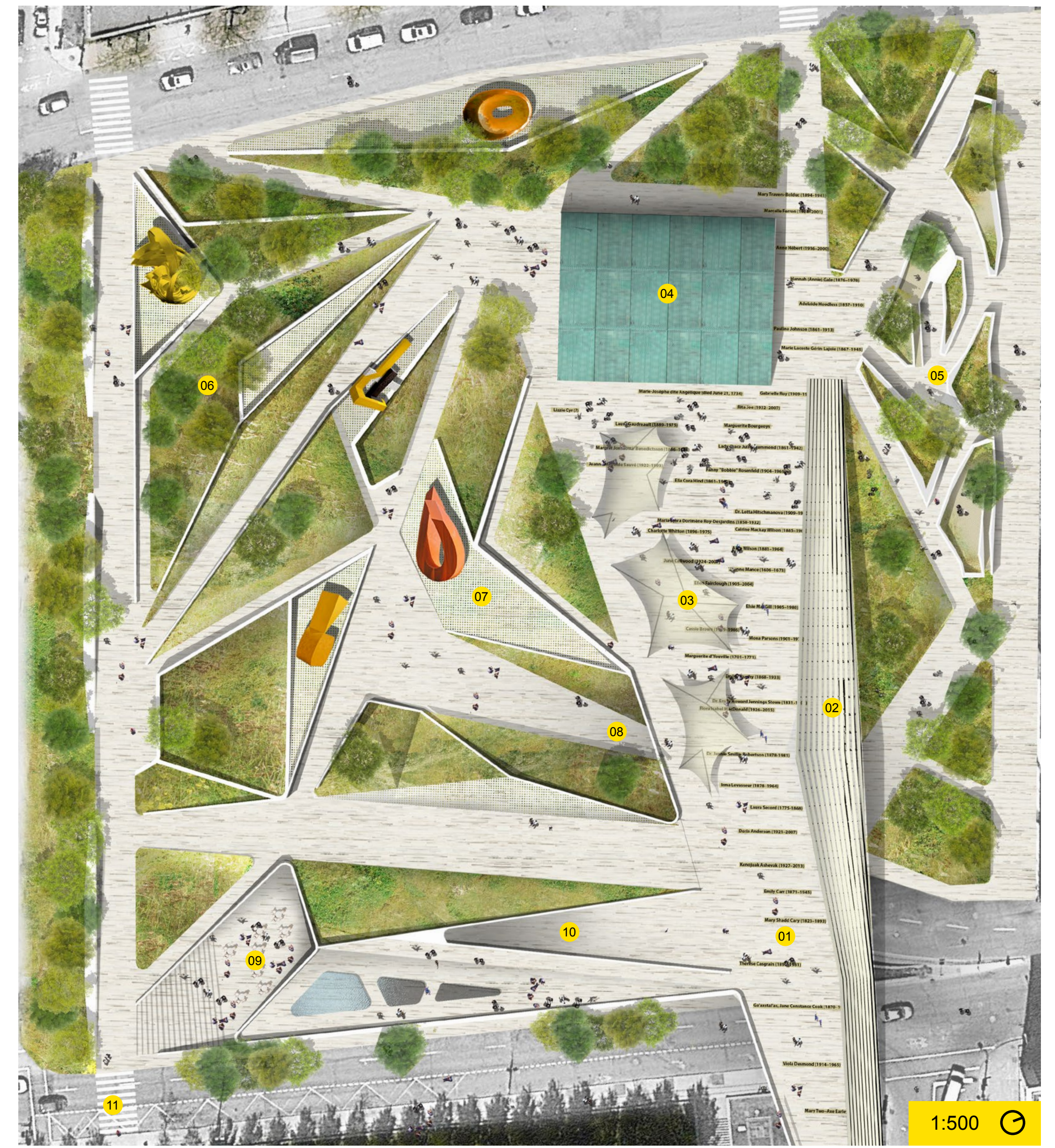
Our design is further rooted in its historical context, influenced by the geometries of the ramps that evoke the distinctive identity of the Old Town. The planting strategy guides the visual integration of the site to celebrate its close proximity to the Old Town. Tree clusters of varying heights frame vistas throughout the space, providing clear way finding between the station and Cite Administrative and framing the installed artworks. The covered canopy over the bridge shelters pedestrians as they pass between the station and the old city during adverse weather conditions. To further bind the site to its context and provide a new source of animation, a play corridor is situated across the north side of the square with seating areas, play equipment, and robust shapes and forms. Strategically located here, the previously inactive façade of the CHUM buildings are brought to life by children and families using this space as a gathering place.

We believe our design is complementary to forthcoming public space designs close to the site such as Viger Square and provides a public space for artistic innovation that integrates the historical and diverse contemporary identity of Montréal.

- 1 Below ground Metro line
- 2 Avenue Viger East
- 3 Auto route Ville-Marie
- 4 Champ de Mars Station
- 5 Retained maintenance access stair core
- 6 Proposed gallery / cafe and cycle repair building
- 7 Rue Saint Antoine East
- 8 Champ de Mars green space
- 9 Proposed overpass
- 10 Lightweight build up
- 11 Art sculptures located above structural column
- 12 Display plinths for female sculptors



View of main space with overpass in the background



- 1 Pedestrian/cycle overpass
- 2 Play corridor
- 3 Sculpted landscape to hide structure
- 4 Flexible space
- 5 Champ-de-Mars Station
- 6 Main entrance to gallery, cafe and bike repair
- 7 Elevated entrance to gallery, cafe and bike repair
- 8 Pedestrian crossing, secondary access to old town



View looking towards the old town from the Champ de Mars station

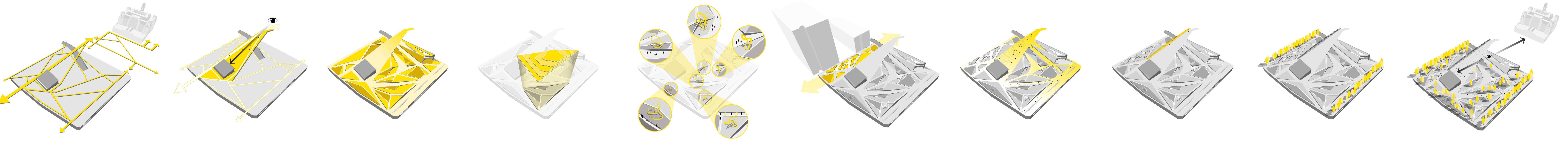
View looking west from the overpass with the CBD behind



Section through the site looking North



Aerial view of the site



Harmonise new with old, drawing influence from the geometries of the existing ramps which once contained the old town to create a distinct identity

Elevate the Station to become another canvas in an outdoor gallery/sculpture park

A series of sculpted surfaces form a holistic design that disguises the level changes between the different elements of the site

Use lightweight void formers, lightweight soils and strategically locate load bearing design components such as the bridge structure, artwork and buildings to minimise the loading on below surface structures

Collaborate with the Montreal MAC museum to provide a platform in the public space where female artists can exhibit

Activate the blank façades of the CHUM buildings by sculpting the landscape to create play for all ages

Commemorate the life of Marie-Joseph Angélique and the other women significant to the identity of the city by inscribing their names in the paved surface of the bridge

Create a covered bridge crossing with ample width to accommodate a flexible programme of events throughout the year

Contain the space with acoustically absorbent planting, tolerant of the climatic conditions and low in maintenance

Frame views to celebrate the site's close proximity to the old town