Moved:

The Mobile Home Community and the Modernist Project

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In July of 2008 Montreal's horse racing track, the Hippodrome, closed permanently. Its owner, Attractions Hippiques, a company belonging to Senator Paul Massicotte, had been placed under bankruptcy protection. The controversial decision has put hundreds of employees out of work, and forced hundreds more horse racing businesses out of Montreal.[1] The closure of the track represents a second major displacement for some of Montreal's harness horse racing community; the first occurred in 1965. Throughout the 1950s and into the mid 60s the Hippodrome, then known as Blue Bonnets Raceway, was a vibrant part of one of Montreal's trendiest neighbourhoods. The track was located just west of Boulevard Decarie, where it intersects with Jean Talon. This northerly strip of the Boulevard was once lined with popular restaurants like Piaza Tomazo, Diligence, Miss Montreal, 77 Sunset Strip, and the surviving Ruby Foo's. On the Southwest corner of Decarie and Jean Talon where the Walmart stands today, there was a trailer park. Existing within the city limits, unusual for a mobile home community, this particular trailer park was connected to Blue Bonnets and was home to members of the horse racing community. At that time many racetracks in North America provided harness horse trainers and drivers and their families with temporary or permanent lots for trailers. In 1965 the Blue Bonnets mobile home community was removed from the site to make way for the expansion of Decarie in preparation for the influx of traffic expected for Expo 67, which, as the most successful World's Fair to date, was to draw tens of millions of visitors from around the world to Montreal between April and October of 1967.[2]

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1 CBC News, “Montreal racetrack closed under bankruptcy protection,” *CBC News Online,* 27 June 2008, web (accessed 12 May 2009).

2 Judy MacDonald, interview with the author, Montreal, 15 March 2009.

I have had the privilege of speaking with three women who remember the Blue Bonnets mobile home community during the seven year period before its dispersion in 1965. These women took the time to share these memories and personal photographs; they also assisted with the preparation for this essay by creating drawings of the layout of their homes and community at Blue Bonnets. Upon these visual and aural resources the present paper depends, both methodologically and in terms of important, primary research. Building from the first-hand accounts and cognitive maps of Marguerite Baise, her daughter Elena, and Elena's childhood friend, Judy MacDonald, this essay seeks to understand personal histories through spatial analysis, proposing that the architecture of the mobile home contains within it a duality mirrored in the shape of this particular community, and situating the mobile home as a modernist building typology.

Stability for some horsemen and their families was contingent on mobility. In paradoxical harmony, community rootedness required a set of wheels. I further propose that this built-in functional contradiction was a fitting feature for families that lived by a stringently gendered order. Judy MacDonald said of the racing community, “when I grew up, it was a man's world.” As a picture of the kind of independence and freedom of movement required by men who worked seasonal jobs like horse racing, the home on wheels was designed and marketed as an ideal domestic haven, a space tended to by the women in the family who, at that time, had no place in the barns. Duality seems to define the trailer, a home that combines the ultimate freedom of the road with a fixedness to domestic space. For the horse racing community, the mobile home meant financial as well as domestic stability ensured by the potential to relocate for seasonal work, reinforced by the comfort of a home that accompanies the traveller.

Moving through an analysis of the mobile home as a form of modernist architecture, I will conclude by drawing out the duality of movement and stability to its ultimate irony. Despite its unique expression of modernist design strategies, the mobile home was moved out of Montreal to make way for the city's immense modernist makeover, which culminated in Expo 67. Moreover, the very structures providing stability for the tightly-knit, horse racing, trailer dwelling community ultimately served to expedite its disintegration. The mobile homes were relatively easy to move: no demolition required. There were dozens of home owners on the site, but only one piece of land to expropriate, which was under the ownership of the raceway. Interestingly, Blue Bonnets was sold the to a holding company headed by Paul Desmarais in 1965, the very year Judy MacDonald recalls having been displaced.[3]

Movement: into Montreal, the trailer, and the seasons

Judy MacDonald, then Burgon, moved to Montreal with her family in 1957. Then five years old, she spent the next seven years in what she now calls luxury. I asked her to draw a map of what she remembers (Fig. 1). Up to fifty families lived in the community at any given time. The trailer lots are located at the bottom left hand corner of the map. The community was surrounded by large open fields to play in, and a grove of trees that Judy remembers as a forest. They also had a pony. As Judy commented, “what city kid had a pony?” “It was like living in the country and in the city at the same time,” she recalls. Elena Baise, who moved into the community with her parents around 1960 has similarly positive recollections of her childhood at

3 Attractions Hippique, “Quebec's Racing History: 1958 – 1982,” *Hippodrome Montreal,* web (accessed 18 May, 2009). Unfortunately, I have not been able to determine whether the sale of Blue Bonnets was made before of after the removal of the trailer park.

Blue Bonnets. “I felt like Alice in Wonderland,” she told me.[4]

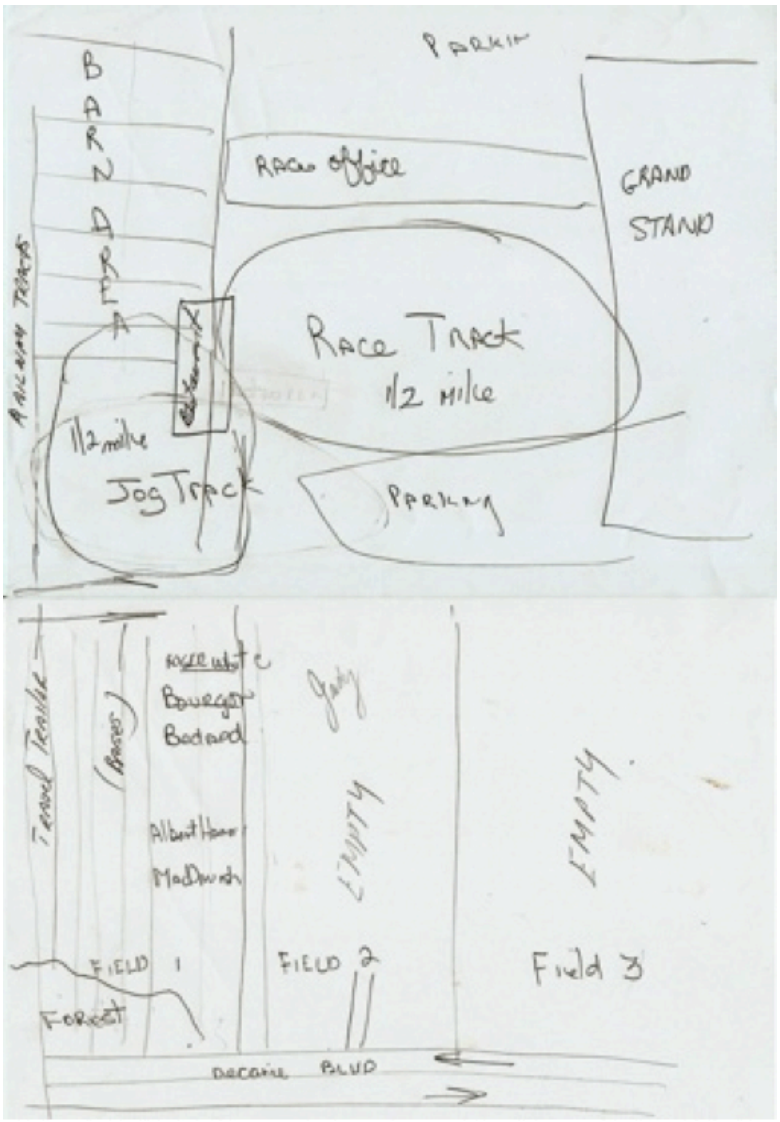

Fig. 1. Judy MacDonald's map of Blue Bonnets trailer park, April 2009. A list of family names, including Burgon, indicates the location of trailers to the left of “Field 2.” The map is oriented to the northwest, with Decarie Boulevard running along the bottom.

4 Judy MacDonald, Elena Baise, and Margarite Baise, interview with the author, Montreal, 28 March 2009.

To Elena, crossing the railway tracks (located to the right on her map) on the way to school was like leaving wonderland and entering the real world (Fig. 2). Her mother Marguerite calls the period of time she spent living by the racetrack her "circus life." Though these fairy tale recollections easily evoke the kind of romanticized freedom often associated with the trailer home, all three women made sure to balance the picture during our interviews. Each spoke community, family, belonging, and responsibility. What was luxurious for Judy was not only the idyllic playground around her home, but also the fact that she and her two brothers were able to attend the same school year after year. Horse racing was a seasonal sport at the time. Men who raced standard-bred harness horses, like Marguerite's husband and Judy's father, worked in Montreal in the fall and spring and moved to other tracks in the summer months when the thoroughbreds took over at Blue Bonnets. While some families moved their homes frequently, the Burgons and the Baises often left their trailers parked at Blue Bonnets, moving on without them for the summer, and returning to Montreal in the fall when the kids started school and the standard-bred season reopened.[5]

In fact, for families like the Burgons and the Baises, the freedom of wheels was a freedom of choice. It was expensive to move a mobile home and not every family chose to do so, just as not every racing family lived in a trailer at all. It was a matter of preference, economic efficiency, and family needs. The sense of fulfillment provided both by home ownership and the rush of competitive racing was balance by a sense of responsibility centred around a stable education for the children, as well as stable, though seasonal employment. Portable, but quite large, the winterized General brand trailers owned by both the Baises and

5 Judy MacDonald, et al., 28 March 2009.

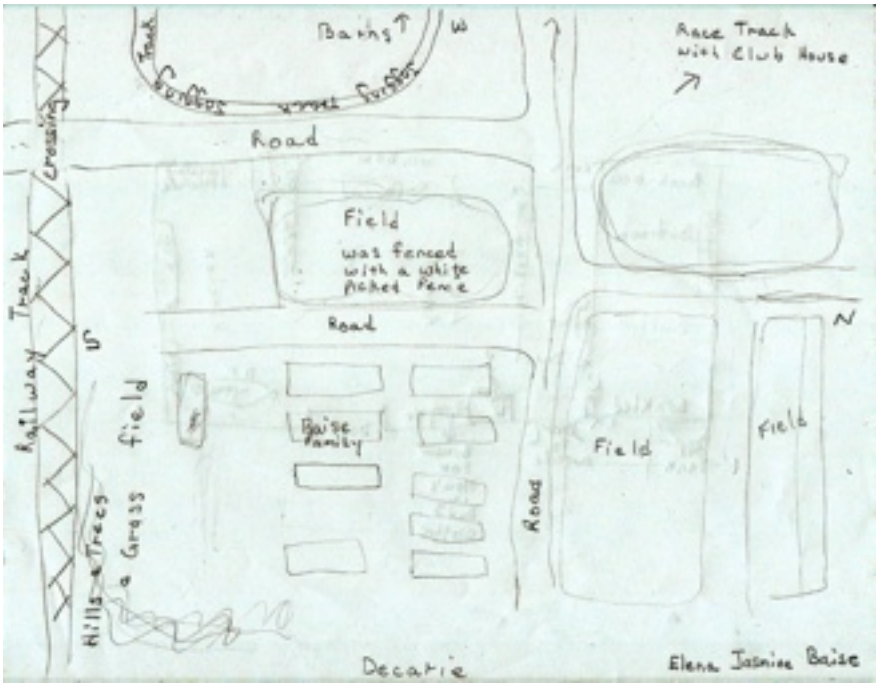

Fig. 2. Elena Baise's map of Blue Bonnets trailer park, April 2009. The Baise family trailer, marked "Baise family," is located on the left side of the map just below the second horizontal "Road" from the top. The map is oriented to the southwest with Decarie Boulevard along the bottom.

Fig. 3. The Burgon family trailer, c.1961. Photograph courtesy of Judy MacDonald.

Fig. 4. Advertisement for the "National 50," 1955. Source: Atlas Mobile Home Museum.

Burgons stood on their lots at Blue Bonnets year round. The Burgon trailer, like many others in the community was, for the most part, a stationary mobile home (Fig. 3). At fifty feet wide and ten feet long, the Burgon trailer resembled the 1955 "National 50" (Fig. 4). Advertised as ideal for a family (see Fig. 4), this kind of trailer suited the Burgon family of five and their Great Dane (Fig. 5).[6]

When winnings were good, a sturdy financial situation meant that a family could expand their trailer or embellish their lot, purchasing width extensions, building porches, or putting in lawns. Many of the domestic comforts and aesthetic essentials associated with permanent, site-built housing were within reach for some families living at Blue Bonnets. And when opportunity or need arose, the mobile homes could be moved at the cost of a professional, hired truck to another racetrack. On the occasion that the Burgon family did move their fifty-foot trailer, it was to spend a summer at Richelieu Park, a racetrack across town.[7] Movement, the defining structural feature of the mobile home, met the unique needs of families seeking the stability of home and community while relying on seasonal employment as the primary source of income facilitating that stable lifestyle. As Claude Fortin explains in her essay, "The Built Environment of the American Dream," the mobile home's built-in potential for home ownership and domestic stability for those with incomes based on independent, migratory forms of employment continues to be key to their popularity in North America today.[8]

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6 Judy MacDonald, et. al.

7 Judy MacDonald, 15 March 2009.

8 Claude Fortin, The Built Environment and the American Dream*"* (unpublished paper), (Concordia University, 2008)14.

Fig. 5. A view of Blue Bonnets trailer park with Mark Burgon, c.1961. Photograph courtesy of Judy MacDonald.

Movement: space, place, and gender

The neighbourhood of trailers at Blue Bonnets was at times a social hub for women and children. In fact, as the 1963 Vagabond advertisement shown in figure six demonstrates, the mobile home was often suggestively marketed as a woman's domain. The ad features four domestic scenes, each showing a woman going about her daily business in the Vagabond trailer. Mending clothing and cooking, the women mark the mobile home as a comfortable space for domestic activity commonly associated with women's work at the time. The ad also gives leisure time in the mobile home a deliberately feminine air, depicting a woman stretching out on a large

bed in a glamourous black night gown. The ad idealizes the suitability of the trailer to a woman's daily life, while romanticizing the space as a luxurious haven where bubble baths and black silk are waiting at the end of the day.

Fig. 6. Advertisement for the Vagabond Coach, 1963. Source: Atlas Mobile Home Museum.

Far from suggesting that the trailer interior was in any way essentially gendered, I would say that the emphasis on domesticity in the design and marketing strategies for mobile homes mirrored a rigidly gendered social fabric. Nonetheless, I perceive the space as a site for women's experience within a tradition otherwise largely exclusive of female participation. As Judy MacDonald recalls, when she was growing up girls were not allowed in the barns. While the boys in the community were being groomed into the next generation of trainers and drivers, the girls and women occupied another realm of Blue Bonnets. The mobility of the trailer home made

it possible to physically insert the domestic realm into the raceway grounds, a space otherwise devoted to what was then a man's sport. Along with ladies' night at the track, the mobile home itself presented a spatial opportunity for women that did not exist in the barns.[9] While the presence of a trailer park did not disrupt the rigid gender roles of the community, its structural duality uniting home and road allowed entire families, women and girls included, a visible presence beyond the grandstand.

In his 1999 thesis, "Mobile Home*,"* Keith Tetlow describes the trailer as structure that "casts away any romantic pretence of attachment to place," while simultaneous fulfilling inclinations towards "rootedness, permanence, and the establishment of the intrinsically conservative nature of place and place attachment."[10] While the paradox is appealing, I would have to disagree with the idea that romance is cast away. Based on the stories of Marguerite and Elena Baise and Judy MacDonald, I would argue that where conservative inclinations towards a feminized domestic place were played out, they were accompanied by romantic sentiments of attachment to the site of the trailer park, a green expanse where the three women locate a past of domestic bliss associated with luxury, freedom, and close community.

For others the mobile home signified something altogether different. Elena and Judy recall facing rejection at the local Catholic school by nuns who meant to demean the girls, then six, by calling them "gypsies".[11] A paradigm built on a classist, racist sense of white middle-to-upper class superiority insists on an image of trailer park life as a failed form of whiteness characterized by loose morals and irresponsibility leading to financial failure. According to Matt

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9 Judy MacDonald, 15 March 2009.

10 Keith Tetlow, "Mobile Home*,"* (M.Arch. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1999) 26.

11 Judy MacDonald, et. al., 28 March 2009.

Wray, the label "poor white trash," coined in the 1830s, delineates an identity separate from the dominant moral culture. The term functions as a "stygmatype," asserting a boundary "between acceptable and unacceptable identities [and] proper and improper behaviours."[12] With the rise of the mobile home, the label "white trash" became increasingly associated with the trailer park.

Stereotypes perpetuated in the 50s and 60s on the covers of popular paperback novels suggest that there is something inherently unstable about life in a home on wheels. The tagline on the cover of Glenn Canary's *Trailer Park Trash* reads "their love was as mobile as their home

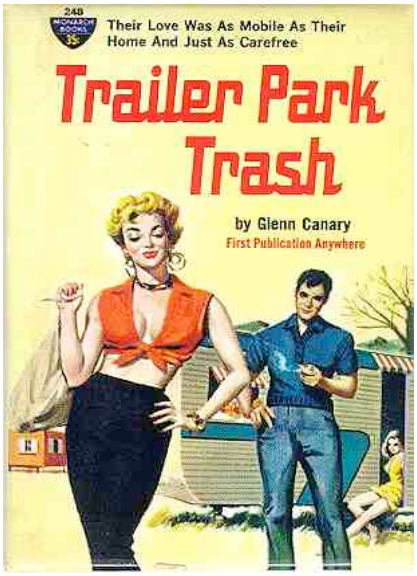

Fig. 7. Cover of Glenn Canary's *Trailer Park Trash,* c.196? Source: Atlas Mobile Home Museum

and just as carefree" (Fig. 7). The suggestion of promiscuity is echoed by the revealing clothing of the two women pictured and the desirous glance of the man the stands between them in the middle ground. The composition suggests his movement from one to the other. As one woman

12 Matt Wray, *Not Quite White* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) 22-23.

reclines in the trailer doorway as though "spent," the man gestures towards the woman in the foreground, whose sly smirk and comely body language tell us she is aware of his stare. While the scene is a potentially positive representation of a woman in command of her sexuality, the title may block a positive reading. *Trailer Park Trash* directly appropriates derogatory language in order to create a sellable, eroticized stereotype of female trailer park residents. In contrast, for Judy MacDonald and the Baise women, trailer park life was characterized by the ease of childcare in a safe neighbourhood, and weekly church services provided at the racetrack clubhouse by a visiting priest.[13]

Movement: a modernist capsule vs. Le Corbusier on a box

In some ways, the mobile home is Modernism encapsulated. Rolling heavily down highways behind trucks hitched for home delivery, the mobile home may not seem to outwardly boast the slick and rational modernist aesthetics, but it packs a few essentials. Encased in aluminum Dutch lap, the vernacular siding of the modest North American house, the mobile home interior is a reasoned set of spatial solutions to sate the highest modernist desire. With tables that folded out from beneath counter tops, movable wall partitions, Murphy beds, overhead storage, Le Corbusier would have felt right at home. In fact, the renowned modernist architect did occupy his own minimalist, compact living space. In 1923 he carried out his design

13 Judy MacDonald, 15 March 2009.

Fig. 8. Le Corbusier's guest room, “Le Lac” bungalow, Vevey, Geneva, 1923. The space saving platform/dresser provides the inhabitant with a view through the window, as well as down into the room itself. These built-in visual possibilities likely provide the illusion of spaciousness. Source: Benton 2006, 92.

for a small guest room in his mother's “Le Lac” bungalow on Lake Geneva in Vevey. The modest quarters consist of a bunk bed, a chair, a table, and a two drawer dresser (Fig. 8).[14] The latter resembles a stage block just large enough for the chair and table to sit on top of it, saving space while providing a view of the lake from the small, high window. This hermetic Le Corbusian setting shares some key features with the social space of the Burgon family mobile home. Just multiply the single chair by four. In figure nine, a group of kids sit around a television set, which sits on a kitchen counter that doubles as a living room surface. A table folds out from beneath the counter, allowing the space to function for dining. The living room and dining room comfortably

14 Tim Benton. *The Modernist Home* (London: V&A Publications, 2006) 93.

share a single space, which opens out over the counter to a partially sectioned-off kitchen area. Echoes of Le Corbusier's space saving design bounce off of the surfaces of the trailer interior. Both Judy and Elena remember bunk beds, while Marguerite's Murphy bed folded into the wall to turn her bedroom into a family room in the daytime.

Fig. 9. The Burgon trailer interior, c.1964. The TV stands on the kitchen counter. Below it is the dining room table, seen here in its folded position. Photograph courtesy of Judy MacDonald.

Efficiency and the economy of domestic space informed the designs of modernist architects and the mobile home industry alike. Notably, the works of Austrian architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky (1897-2000) find their analogue in the fold-up, roll-away living of the home on wheels. Her lovely 1935 design for a Wickelkommode (changing table), as well as a model apartment showcased in Frankfurt are most clearly evocative of movements linking

modernist home concepts to the mobile home interior (Fig. 10, 11).[15] A constant shifting, rolling, sliding, and tucking of cleverly designed furniture continues to make limited domestic space comfortable for both those living in dense urban and those who make their homes in trailers. For the latter, movement sustains home in more ways than one.

Fig. 10. Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, Wickelkommode (changing table), 1935. Source: Frauen Sichtbar Machen.

Fig. 11. Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, two family dwelling, Frankfurt, c.193? Source: Benton, 75.

Movement: Modernist urban planning, the metropolis, the trailer park, and the autoroute

Modernist architecture and urban planning often result in a rational configuration of elements directing the flow of human movement for increased efficiency in a given space. The roll-out beds of the Schütte-Lihotzky apartment and the fold-out table of the Burgon trailer orchestrate certain movements within the domestic space. Folding and tucking become daily tasks for the inhabitants of mobile homes and modernist apartments. Incorporated into the

15 Benton 75.

architecture, these actions choreograph efficiency into the ballet of domestic movement.

Returning to Le Corbusier's little room, I would like to examine the movement of the eye through spaces designed to "expand." The carefully considered placement of an appropriately sized object can make a space look, and therefore feel, bigger. A consideration of the visual is integral to what Tim Benton describes as the "essential Modernist home." The author identifies this ideal "reduced to a minimum" at the Lake Geneva house. "A bed, a table and chair, and a beautiful view" are all that is needed.[16] Le Corbusier's stage block dresser opens up the tiny room, elevating the solitary viewer in his "monastic reading place" to the view beyond the bungalow walls.[17] In the mobile home, the necessarily open concept living/dining room and kitchenette widen the range of movement as well as the field of vision. With the kitchen area clearly visible from the living/dining room, it is easy to envision the entire array of family rituals playing out with the clarity of choreographed movement inside the trailer.

The visual appeal to familial sentiments is exploited in a 1951 advertisement for the American Coach Company where actors demonstrate daily family interactions in a sort of domestic continuum from the bedroom in the back, through the kitchenette and into the dining area (Fig. 12). The analogy to theatre is appropriate considering how often the stage becomes a pared down version of the home. No movement on the stage is superfluous, and no superfluous piece of furniture may be allowed to disrupt the clear line of sight through the entire trailer. Thus, the act of viewing the trailer interior contributes to a spacious feeling. With its tables and Murphy beds folded up, the trailer interior can look and feel quite large. The eye is free to roam from room to room. I would imagine that looking down onto his little room from his chair on a

16 Benton, 93.

17 Ibid.

stage block, Le Corbusier would have seen ample, uncluttered space. In fact looking down is something Le Corbusier liked to do.

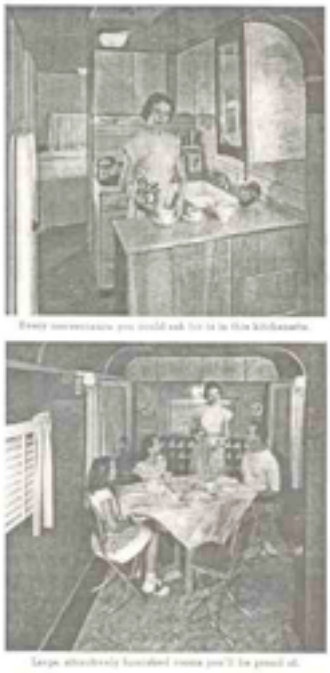

Fig. 12. Mobile Home Advertisement,
American Coach Company, 1951.
Source: Atlas Mobile Home Museum.

Le Corbusier's modernist spatial concepts were, to a large degree visually directed from above. Beyond the aspects of vision-based movement through space taken for granted by the sighted person, and beyond surface interpretations of aesthetics in terms of what is "pleasing the eye," Le Corbusier's Modernism was profoundly shaped by what I can best describe as the visual-rational. The architect relished in the privilege of viewing Paris from an airplane. As Anthony Vidler explains, "the aerial view... become a part of Le Corbusier's representational and

conceptual technology," inspiring an architecture of imposition.[18] Envisioned at a distance where only the eye has access to what is below, his infamous "Plan Voisin" for Paris throws rigid formations over the city's core from the sky (Fig. 13). The design privileges the relationship of eye to mind over all others. Were the plan carried out, movement through the city would be

Fig. 13. Le Corbusier, Plan Voisin for the centre of Paris, France, c.1924. The birds-eye perspective informed the architect's totalizing, rationalist aesthetic. Source: Lebbeus Woods Blog.

guided through the over-determined grid of pathways. Urban planning inspired by aerial perspectives was a common modernist solution. Plans for Montreal's extensive expressway system were carved out from above with little thought of the already functioning movements of

18 Anthony Vidler, "Photourbanism: Planning the City from Above and from Below," in *A Companion to the City,* Gary Bridge and Sopie Watson, eds. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 36.

those living below.[19] The traffic that flows, or stutters, down the Decarie expressway today is the retinal afterimage of mayor Jean Drapeau's birds-eye view.

The expansion of the Decarie transformed the two-lane city street into a major artery, linking Montreal with New York to the South and the Laurentians to the North. The Decarie, or Autoroute 15, is part of the kind of arterial system that facilitates the movement of oversized vehicles like the mobile home. As it played out in Montreal in 1965, there was no room for any kind of modernist symbiosis between mobile home and highway in Montreal. Despite the obvious conceptual and aesthetic relationship of the mobile home to the modernist project, preparations for Expo 67, itself a major showcase for architectural Modernisms, spurred the removal of the trailer park from Montreal. According to Judy MacDonald, the lot on which the park was located was rezoned as purely commercial and industrial, effectively disallowing the residential presence of the trailer.[20]

As Expo 67 boasted such modernist solutions for increasingly overcrowded urban space as Moshe Safdie's Habitat 67, the event was effectively displacing the Blue Bonnets mobile home community. Habitat itself, with its precast concrete box apartments set together on site, bears a conceptual resemblance to the cluster of prefabricated homes that once stood on the Blue Bonnets grounds.[21] In fact, trailer park formations find their aesthetic analogue in many practical housing designs and urban planning solutions of the modernist era. A comparison between Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin and a 1955 photograph of Evergreen Trailer Park of Aurora, Minnesota

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19 Danielle Lewis, “The Turcot Yards: Community Encounters with a Queer Sublime” (paper presented at City as Palimpsest II: Hauntings, Occupations, Theatres of Memory, Graduate Conference, Concordia University, Montreal, 17 April 2009).

20 Judy MacDonald, 15 March 2009.

21 Moshe Safdie, *Habitat 67* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967) 16.

illustrates this link (Fig. 14).

Both articulate efficiency through the simplest, most rational geometric grid and the repetition of identical architectural structures. Meanwhile, the trailer itself echoes common modernist home exteriors. Designed in 1927, Dutch architect J.J.P. Oud's boxy row houses in Stuttgart, Germany share some distinctive features with the typical trailer home (Fig. 15). The long, slim rectangular prisms with small windows near the roof on the smaller face can be considered a precursor to the most popular style of trailer of the 50s and 60s. The rounded corner of the lower structure is also related to an immensely popular detail of the 1950s trailer. Each long, boxy home in the massive Evergreen Trailer Park is finished with a rounded ends. Both the concern for space and the simplified, geometric shape of modernist design featured prominently in the placement and appearance of the common mobile home.

Fig. 14. Evergreen Trailer Park, Aurora Minn., 1955. The repetition of identical architectural in a grid pattern reflects modernist urban planning strategies. Source: Hurley, 235.

Fig. 15. J.J.P. Oud, north side of houses, Werkbund exhibition, Stuttgart, Germany, 1927. The elongated, boxy buildings, which feature rounded edges resemble popular mobile home designs of the 1950s. Source: Benton, 76.

Why then, with all of its potential as a stable, affordable, comfortable and aesthetically modern(ist) housing solution, did the mobile home not survive Jean Drapeau's modernization of Montreal? It travels down highways, carrying with it all of the tables that fold and the beds that hide and the housing solutions for lower income families like the perfect little modernist capsule. According to Annick Germain and Damaris Rose, "encouraging the spatial mobility of individuals is one of the leitmotifs of urban planning."[22] It is also the defining feature of the mobile home. Just as modern urban populations rely on public transportation to move more easily through the city, the harness racing community benefited from a mobile lifestyle well suited to seasonal work. Despite its vividly modernist features, the trailer does not quite fit the Le Corbusian or Drapeauian urban visions. This ill fit is the result of social implications which outweighed the mobile home's spatial possibilities.

What separated trailer park dwellers from the citizen beneficiaries of modernization in 1960s Montreal was class and new trends in social mobility. While Jean Drapeau oversaw the construction of a metro system to ease the flow of Montreal's population through city space, the movement of young people across social strata was giving rise to a "new middle class." As Marcel Fournier explains, "a two-fold movement" was redefining Montreal's class structure at the time of its rapid modernization in the 60s. The "upward mobility of young people out of the working class" was accompanied by an increasing demand for higher education. In the face of ever growing interest in the "cultural capital" provided by education, it became difficult "to improve or maintain social status from one generation to the next" through the inheritance of accumulated wealth. As small family run businesses shut down to make way for national and

22 Annick Germain and Damaris Rose, "Montreal's Buily Form: French Heritage, Victorian Legacy and Modernist Ambitions," in *Montreal: The Quest for a Metropolis* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2000) 73.

multinational corporations, independent horsemen were pushed aside to make room for a modernized Montreal.[23] In addition to the expansion of business, "ever-increasing state intervention," as Fournier puts it, was a definitive process of Montreal's modernization. As the provincial government took control of education and hydroelectric power, Jean Drapeau set about physically restructuring the city of Montreal.[24] The Blue Bonnets trailer park was not originally the result of urban planning. The movements of its many homes were not devised from above. Perhaps unprogrammed movement is, in fact, the antithesis of the modernist project, at least in the Le Corbusio-Drapeaunian sense. Like Le Corbusier's hypothetical Paris, the city shaped by the interests of Drapeau, big business, and the new middle class was governed by grand, rational plans. The 1965 plan of "Limited Access Expressways" prepared by Montreal's City Planning Department provides a clear example of one such master plan (Fig. 16). Future streams of vehicles moving through the city are projected in a few clean lines onto the city grid.[25] The sporadic movement of a semi-nomadic urban population was at variance with the over-determined flow of traffic down massive highways.

Movement: out of Montreal

While rootedness was of the utmost importance to many racing families at Blue Bonnets, it was not a lasting feature of the community. To borrow Keith Tetlow's words once again, the mobile home at its structural essence is a dwelling place that "holds on to the potential of

23 Marcel Fournier, "A Society in Motion: The Quiet Revolution and the Rise of the Middle Class" In *Montreal Thinks Big,* ed. Andre Lortie, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2004) 33.

24 Fournier 34.

25 Lewis.

Fig. 16. Plan for “Limited Access Expressways.” City Planning Department, City of Montreal, as published in *Métropole: Les Cahier d'urbanisme,* no.3 (Oct. 1965): 40. Source: Lortie, 91.

displacement.”[26] Unfortunately, the structure that facilitated sustained family presence at the track was deemed expendable. According to Judy MacDonald, once the lot was rezoned the onus was on the families to sell their trailers and find somewhere else to live. The removal of the mobile home from the city of Montreal was physically carried out in 1965 by those who were being displaced – yet another irony layered upon a structure that, in its duality of home and road, continues to be stigmatized as ill suited for stable family life. The stygmatype “poor white trash” belies the trailer's potential for the stability of home ownership and sustained family presence for those who work seasonal jobs.[27]

The mobile home presents solutions for housing that are practical and efficient on many levels, as the drawings, photographs and memories of Marguerite Baise, her daughter Elena, and

26 Tetlow 26.

27 Wray 23.

Elena's childhood friend, Judy MacDonald attest. In fact, efficiency is built-in to its very structure. Folding beds and tables, and open-concept spatial arrangements make very small spaces comfortable for entire families. The trailer park often represents an extension of the mobile home's interior order. The boxy vehicles can be placed quite close together, as we saw at Evergreen Trailer Park, giving the appearance of highly ordered, Le Corbusian urban planning (Fig. 13, 14). Furthermore, the exterior of the common 1950s mobile home, with its rounded edges and elongated shape, bears a striking resemblance to the architectural works of modernists like J.J.P. Oud (Fig. 15). Through rational planning, spatial mobility, and elegant geometric aesthetics, the mobile home obeys most of the tenants of Modernism. Even so, Montreal's massive modernization of the 1960s failed to preserve the city's mobile home community. The very process of the modernist project reveals the disconnect between Modernism and the trailer park lifestyle. Throughout the 60s, over-determined, highly programmed patterns of movement where mapped out for the citizens of Montreal through the construction of an expressway system (Fig. 15).[28] Coinciding with an increase in state intervention into social and structural systems throughout the province—namely education and electricity—the Modernization of Montreal was a manifestation of municipal control. Metropolitan stability took on a highly programmed character in the years leading up to Expo 67. Associated with instability and lack, the semi-nomadic trailer dweller was swept aside as Montreal prepared to showcase its successes as a burgeoning metropolis. The Blue Bonnets trailer park made room for millions of tourists to file into the city down the Decarie expressway.

With the park gone, the Blue Bonnets families adapted, as perhaps they were uniquely

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28 Lewis.

capable of doing. Some bought farms, others may have moved off with their trailers. The Burgons chose a duplex on McLynn, where it took Judy quite a while to get used to the awful racket of the people living above. Today she finds herself packing again. This time, Judy and her husband Mike, a horseman she met at Blue Bonnets, are making the move to Prince Edward Island where harness racing is still very much alive. With the closure of the Hippodrome, many horsewomen and men are slowly making their way out of Montreal, once again. For Judy MacDonald this move triggers memories of the community's disintegration forty-four years ago, and of the Blue Bonnets trailer that was her home.[29]

29 Judy MacDonald, 15 March 2009.

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