

# The Rules of the Road: News Media, Street Art, and Crime

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Photo courtesy of Zeke's Gallery, Montreal.

Fig. 1. Roadsworth, vine on crosswalk marker, spray-painted image, corner of St. Urbain and St. Joseph, Montreal.

## Marking up the Macadam

Before sunrise on November 29, 2004, the illicit stenciling career of the artist known as Roadsworth came to an abrupt halt in the streets of Montreal.<sup>1</sup> Police officers arrested Roadsworth, the alias of Toronto-native Peter Gibson (b. 1973), moments after he had begun to apply spray paint onto the ground.<sup>2</sup> Since 2001, the artist had playfully covered the streets of the trendy, cultural districts of Mile End and the Plateau-Mont-Royal with eccentric, humorous illustrations of owls, vines, zippers, barbed wire, cameras, ropes, and other everyday objects. Spanning up to five feet, these brightly coloured stencil works quirkily remapped the neighbourhood by appropriating the nondescript, yellow and white tracings painted by the City on the roads (figs. 1-7). Gibson integrated his crisp images into the parallel stripes of pedestrian crosswalks, lane markers, medians, and parking spaces. Although these stencils, numbering over one hundred, had gained popularity amongst local residents, the authorities promptly charged the artist with fifty-three counts of mischief and threatened him with staggering fines of up to

\$265,000. The legal battles between Gibson and the City of Montreal lasted until January, 2006, when the Municipal Court reduced the charges to five mischief counts, for which he was ordered to pay a \$250 fine and serve forty hours of community service along with eighteen months probation.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the Roadsworth affair, local newspapers steadfastly covered the vehement responses to the case voiced by the Montreal arts community. In addition, critics and reporters commented on the artist's interventions, emphasizing the conflict between the municipal government's staunch campaign to control uses of public space versus the artist's illegal subversion of the orderly legibility of major traffic arteries. Besides word of mouth and online blogs, news coverage offered the primary means of exposing Roadsworth's art to the general public, as the stencils were ephemeral and restricted to a small zone in the city. Photos or films of these works were not publicly displayed in a gallery or museum. Consequently, the arts columns and local events pages of printed newspapers became the main forum for debates on street art's cultural and legal legitimacy, as well as the policing, transgression, and negotiation of urban spaces.

By discussing Montreal newspapers and selected online texts concerning the Roadsworth case—from 2004 to 2006—this article analyses the significance of the news media's reception of street art and its relation to public space. I argue that such news coverage developed diverse, often conflicting, perspectives toward street art while

countering institutionally sanctioned uses and conceptions of public space. The press advocated an oppositional, albeit ambiguous, stance against Montreal's City Hall, individual politicians, and the police. As primary sources, news publications provide valuable examples of the critical reception of street art and comprise a mode of documenting ephemeral works through texts, personal accounts, and photographs. Of relevance to this discussion are two types of news writing that shaped the debates surrounding the case: interviews with the artist and art critics' columns. Interviews introduced readers to the artist and his plight, while articles by critics produced a set of terms and frameworks for assessing the aesthetic and political significance of street art

The interrelationships amongst stencil art, reception, documentation, and journalism compel a reexamination of prior studies of art illegally produced in the streets. Such scholarship has generally privileged graffiti. Contemporary graffiti research is an interdisciplinary field spanning criminology, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and art history. Despite the methodological diversity of this research, studies of urban art concur on the basic definition of graffiti as the illegal inscription of an autograph. This logocentric art form consists of either the sobriquet "tagged" by a single "writer" or the initial letters designating the title of a tagging "crew." In separate publications, French media theorist Jean Baudrillard and linguist Jacqueline Billiez interpret tags emblazoned on



Fig. 2. Security camera in parking space.

lamp posts, subway stations, and rail cars as a complex sign system or language of resistance against authority.<sup>4</sup> Whereas most graffiti is composed of stylized writing, the Roadsworth stencils are images. This contrast between writing words and painting pictures in urban art is methodologically significant. Whereas graffiti research often focuses on developing a hermeneutics of the codes and signifying systems of tags, my approach to the stencils emphasizes the power of images to generate multiple, divergent responses from, and uses for, viewers, while galvanizing news media discussions concerning public space.

Meanwhile, the news coverage of Roadsworth disclosed a social relationship among artist, audience, and urban society differing from that of most graffiti culture. The sustained support of local newspapers enhanced the artist's popularity with the general public. The stencils addressed a wide audience composed of neighbourhood denizens, as well as pedestrians, drivers, and tourists navigating the streets. In contrast, much scholarship

on graffiti focuses on a marginalized subculture's deliberate subversion of mainstream culture through the illicit inscription of public and private property; such markings are primarily meant to be understood by that subculture's members and/or rivals. For example, scholars of cultural criminology and subcultural studies, such as Jeff Ferrell, Craig Castleman, and Nancy Macdonald, frame late 20<sup>th</sup>-century urban and suburban graffiti as an integral form of expression for disadvantaged, hip hop youth subcultures. Anthropologist Susan A. Phillips has written about graffiti produced by African-American and Chicano inner-city street gangs in California.<sup>5</sup> Other studies focus on *latrinalia* (bathroom wall graffiti), writing left on trains by skinheads, and the "hobo graffiti" of vagrants.<sup>6</sup> While this varied research concentrates on graffiti's exclusive significance for its intended audience, Roadsworth's stencils implicate the general public, the art world, and local government. As a result, I adopt the intentionally broad term "street art," employed by the majority of news articles writing about the stencils, to distinguish these creations from text-based forms of urban visual expression including graffiti. In addition to stencils, the fluid category of street art encompasses stickers, posters, murals, installations made from found objects, and other uncommissioned works created in outdoor public spaces.<sup>7</sup>

### **In the Headlines: Becoming Acquainted with Roadsworth**

While street artists usually work *incognito*, the press coverage of the

arrest of Roadsworth (a.k.a. Peter Gibson) popularized his name in the local art scene and the broader Montreal community. The artist commented that the revelation of his true identity in the media “was the biggest drag,” adding that “[my] overriding concern at that point was the frustration I felt about not being able to continue [making art in the streets].”<sup>8</sup> He eulogized Roadsworth as “definitely dead in a legal sense, a surreptitious sense.”<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the headlines of most Francophone and Anglophone news columns refer to the artist by his memorable sobriquet, rather than by his real name. “Roadsworth” pays homage to the surname of the contemporary British Land artist, Andy Goldsworthy (b. Cheshire, 1956), and the last name of the Romantic English Poet Laureate, William Wordsworth (1770-1850).<sup>10</sup> Although the unremunerated stencil works lie outside conventional art, the artist’s self-proclaimed affiliations with members of high culture distinguish him from the often socially marginalized graffiti writers. Meanwhile, the composite pseudonym’s cultural references underline the stencils’ aesthetic responses to, and remaking of, outdoor spaces. Over the past few decades, Goldsworthy has ventured into rural landscapes to make *in situ* sculptures out of leaves, plants, stones, and snow. Similarly, some of Wordsworth’s best-known writings invoke nature and pastoral scenery. Despite the bucolic associations of the sculptor’s and poet’s works, the wordplay of Gibson’s *nom de plume* also wittily exposes its urban roots by proclaiming his art’s

“roadworthiness.”

The rural overtones of this invented moniker allude to the stencil artist’s orchestration of an immersive, peripatetic experience of outdoor urban landscapes. By referencing sculptural and poetic engagements with the pastoral, Roadsworth adopts and remakes the tradition of the ramble as a peripatetic form of experiencing and communing with unbounded outdoor spaces. In the oeuvres of contemporary British artists working in the natural environment, such as Goldsworthy, Richard Long, and Hamish Fulton, walking excursions are a prominent aesthetic strategy. The ramble comprises either a performance to be documented in photographs, films, and/or texts, or an outing during which the artist finds raw artistic materials and a place in which to construct a work. By crossing through landscapes on foot, these artists immerse themselves in sensorial, durational experiences of the fluctuating contingencies of natural environments. Yet, their works also expose the culturally mediated character of any human contact with landscape.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to Land Art’s emphasis on the trek of the lone artist through the great outdoors, Roadsworth’s stencils implicate the mobility of multiple viewers by speaking directly to pedestrians and drivers enmeshed in their quotidian itineraries and routines. Gibson thus updates the tradition of the walk to include motorized commuting and joyriding. As the street artist explained, the stencils temporarily converted the streets into a network of spaces for play, experimentation, and

exploration “in an urban context.”<sup>12</sup> Similar to the Earthworks and Land Art of the late 1960s and 1970s, the stencils establish spatial and temporal art viewing conditions that reject the hermetic architectural restrictions of museums and galleries in addition to the orderly programming of the conventional exhibition. Spray-painted images are left on pavement and asphalt for unsuspecting, mobile viewers, rather than an audience who has intentionally arrived at a designated venue to leisurely inspect art objects. Appearing without notice, the stencils fade after a few weeks, or even days, depending on the wear from the relentless passage of tires and feet or the diligence of municipal maintenance crews. This appropriation of public space reinforces the democratic appeal of Gibson’s stencils. Scattered throughout various streets, the images await the random notice of members of the general public commuting to work or running errands.

Through simple, carefully framed close-up and medium-range shots, photographic documentation in local newspapers enhances the visual impact of the stencils’ subtle disruption of urban scenery. As a characteristic example of the artist’s work, one illustration frequently featured in newspapers depicts a lush, leafy yellow vine curling caduceus-like around a white traffic stripe (fig. 1). The artist remarked that his vines were inspired by the gardens and vines of Mile End, an area he described as boasting a pastoral quality.<sup>13</sup> By deftly refashioning the traffic stripe into a rustic post or simplified garden trellis supporting the vine, Roadsworth parodies the

functionality and formal austerity of urban street markings. Emblazoning the form of a hardy, living entity on the passive, inert stripe also suggests a parasitic attack upon, rather than a symbiotic union with, officially sanctioned markings in public space. Meanwhile, the oblique spatial perspective of the image hints at the expansiveness of this spray-painted assault upon the streets: while the stripe stretches sharply away beyond the upper edge of the illustration, the leaves grow increasingly distorted as they unfold from the sidewalk curb into the middle of the road. Like a double-ended corkscrew, the vine tunnels into the core of traffic and the path reserved for walkers. The plant’s bi-directional growth is both a physical expansion across urban space and a symbolic infiltration of municipal regulations. Springing toward the boundary of the image, the writhing vine emerges as a potent, willful organism troubling the geometric rationality of urban planning. Strong diagonal lines vault toward unseen contexts beyond the frame, implying that the vine is merely an offshoot from a main body of images. The ambiguity of scale heightens the boldness of the plant’s movement. Devoid of a horizon, landmarks, or human figures, the composition of the image prevents the viewer from determining the relative dimensions, distances, and positions of forms within a restricted field of vision dominated by the vine’s commanding reclamation of space.

Gibson’s adaptation of traffic lines painted by the City evokes French theorist Michel de Certeau’s analysis of the “tactics” of the oppressed. In

Photo courtesy of Zeke's Gallery, Montreal.



Fig. 3. Lasso tied to manhole cover.

Western technocratic societies, the weak can temporarily defy their oppression and overturn restrictions by clandestinely appropriating or “poaching” existing spaces, practices, products, and cultural forms originally produced and owned by an outside authority. Categorized by de Certeau as forms of “consumption” enacted by disempowered “consumers” or “users,” these furtive, usually unnoticeable acts of resistance in everyday life can neither create nor impose new, independent spaces.<sup>14</sup> Roadsworth’s method of stencil-making evokes de Certeau’s definition of the “tactic” of the oppressed as a mobile, agile mode of operation that profits from the spontaneous opportunities and fortuitous conditions offered by the moment.<sup>15</sup> Recalling his arrest, the artist described practices he had developed to escape detection and apprehension by the police. Working quickly in the dark on deserted streets, the artist used portable,

lightweight materials and kept his bicycle nearby to make a hasty escape from police cruisers.<sup>16</sup> In case of approaching officers, the artist used a “technique of trying to appear like an innocent bystander” by assuming a particular pose.<sup>17</sup>

Although Gibson’s nocturnal appropriation of the streets approached the wily opportunism of the tactic, the

stencils also complicate a key binary underpinning de Certeau’s theory: the distinction between the tactics of the weak and the strategies of the powerful. While de Certeau identifies the tactic as an operation that profits from time, he specifies that the strategy exploits space. The strategy uses a specific locus as a base of operations from which to establish control over one’s surroundings. Such places of authority and power include geographical places and sites of discourse and knowledge.<sup>18</sup> Rather than merely launching a secret, tactical appropriation of existing spaces, the artist strategically carved out a temporary locus of authority for his works by visibly claiming the tarmac. Although the City’s original street markings remained visible and continued to exert their authority by directing the movement of traffic, the stencils staged an open confrontation with City Hall’s regulation of public spaces. Whereas tactics only consume pre-imposed spaces, the stencils

layer, juxtapose, and insert a new landscape of images that challenge conventions of how the streets are policed, experienced, and imagined in everyday life. As suggested by the relation between Roadsworth's stencils and institutional power, this street art resists being compartmentalized neatly into either of de Certeau's terms. Instead, the stencils call for a new paradigm of urban art interventions based on the intersections and tensions between time and space, ephemeral gestures of defiance and established mechanisms of control.

The severity of the charges against the artist may be attributed not only to his illicit co-opting of the streets but also to the potential threat posed to public safety by the stencils. Invoking the importance of public security, the municipal authorities offered a seemingly unquestionable pretext to justify the severity of Gibson's prosecution and, in doing so, set a precedent to prevent copycat spray-painters. Thus, by alluding to danger and potential civil disobedience, City Hall excessively demonized acts of criminal mischief and vandalism. Gibson remarked that

If you look at ... [the stencilled images] from a purely legal point of view, there are arguments that ... [they pose] a safety hazard. For example, if some accident were to happen, somebody could then say, 'Well, the lines on the road were not as specified in the driver's handbook I was given. Therefore . . . .' It creates a dangerous

loophole or precedent that could be exploited. As ridiculous as it is, I can understand that viewpoint.<sup>19</sup>

Gibson's comment is less sarcastically dismissive than it appears. No accidents were reported to have been caused by drivers' confusion over the stencils. Furthermore, newspapers featured photos that exaggerated and homogenized the visibility of the images as uniformly bright, crisp imprints starkly outlined against the dull asphalt and dislocated from the bustling movement of the city. The heterogeneity of experience exceeds the effects of photography. Surfacing randomly in disparate locations and created in varying dimensions, these images were usually discovered accidentally and often passed unnoticed by commuters. Painted in colours similar to those of the traffic stripes, some stencils merged subtly with the existing markings on the ground while others were partially obstructed by parked cars (fig. 2). The finer, smaller images would have been difficult to view from a moving vehicle and were intended for pedestrians instead (figs. 3, 4). Images sprayed onto the sidewalk also addressed viewers on foot (figs. 5, 6). In an editorial featured in *La Presse*, the city's largest and most widely read French-language newspaper, François Cardinal denied that the stencils endangered the public. Appealing to a broad readership, this publication does not adhere to a single political view. Yet, Cardinal bolstered the defence of Gibson launched by intellectual, student, and alternative newspapers.

The editorial asserted that the larger images protected pedestrians by drawing drivers' attention to crosswalks, as in the barbed wires flanking a zebra stripe crossing (fig.7).<sup>20</sup>

### Knowing the Streets: Interviews and Investigations

While the *La Presse* editorial offered an effective, compact denouncement of Gibson's potential imprisonment and fining, published interviews with the artist dissected the details of the arrest. Although brief quotations from the artist appeared in *Le Devoir* and *The Mirror*, extended conversations were featured in *The McGill Daily* and on the *Reading Montreal* website.<sup>21</sup> I invoke the genre of the artist interview not to argue that it provides a definitive, transparent, stable portrayal of events. Neither does this inclusion of interview material aim to subsume artworks to a biographical or psychoanalytical reading of the artist's life and intentions. Various historians of contemporary art have suggested that the interview enacts a highly mediated, even staged event, as well as a form of writing which has historically challenged dominant forms of art criticism.<sup>22</sup> Rather, my analysis suggests that the discourse of the interviews with Gibson produces rhetorical strategies that complicate the power relationships between the artist and the authorities. The texts featured online and in the McGill University newspaper are especially significant as the interlocutors openly demonstrated a fascination with the illicitness of street art. Jack Dylan, in an interview for *Reading Montreal*,

introduced Gibson as an "artist" and "elusive good Samaritan," yet a significant portion of the conversation delved into the minutiae of the arrest and police investigation.<sup>23</sup> Writing for the *McGill Daily*, Charles Mostoller heralded Gibson as a "street artist" and launched the interview by inquiring about the sentence and arrest.<sup>24</sup> Both *Reading Montreal* and the *McGill Daily* operate outside of the mainstream press and appeal to a young, educated, trendy readership. *Reading Montreal* compiles links to online articles originally published in print journals, transcripts of radio news, and essays about local cultural events submitted by visitors to the site. Meanwhile, McGill University undergraduates produce the *Daily*. Featuring articles written by and for students, the newspaper covers current events on campus as well as issues in politics and academia.

These interviews implicitly defied legally sanctioned uses of the roads by validating the criminal artist as a legitimate expert and cultural producer in possession of valuable insider knowledge about urban



Fig. 4. Owl, St. Lawrence Boulevard.

Photo courtesy of Zeke's Gallery, Montreal.



spaces. The interviewers elicited the artist's account of his entanglement with law enforcement to present a first hand understanding of illegal visual culture's daring transgressions in the streets. By framing Gibson as the primary authority of his works and a spokesperson for illegal art, the interviews resonate with the ethnographic methodology of many recent scholarly studies of graffiti in which an established precedent of interviewing exists.<sup>25</sup> At the core of this ethnographic impulse lies the researcher's quest to interpret subcultural practices and codes commonly misrepresented by those outside of that subculture and punished by the legal system. As a documentary research tool, the genre of the interview upholds the producers of unlawful visual culture as the authoritative sources of an illicit urban knowledge. The interviews' valorizing of the artist as an authority complemented the journalists' partial silencing of the voices of institutional power with regards to Roadsworth's interventions. Local news coverage of the arrest notably lacked extended commentary or dissenting opinions from either the municipal government or the police.

The structure of the conversations and the questions posed by Gibson's interlocutors suggest that the interview functions as an oral history and mode of documenting clandestine activity in urban spaces. Gibson's tale of his fateful meeting with the police represents an illicit way of knowing and navigating the city's geography. Responding to the queries of Mostoller and Dylan about the circumstances of his arrest in

November, 2004, the artist explained that at four o'clock in the morning, he was "caught red-handed" and covered in paint while beginning to work on a stencil. After he "made up some lame story" to justify his presence on the street before sunrise, he proceeded to bicycle "way too casually" from the scene. However, after noticing the traces of paint on the ground, the officers soon apprehended and arrested the artist a few blocks away.<sup>26</sup> Besides retelling his arrest, Gibson furnished details about the investigative process. He noted that the police already knew of his work and realized that "after seeing what evidence [had] been brought against me . . . [the police] actually devoted a fair bit of time to cataloguing my activity."<sup>27</sup> During the subsequent interrogation and search of Gibson's home, the police sought evidence to establish the prized "link." By identifying the signature style of any spray-painting vandal, detectives are usually able then to connect a particular individual or crew to a series of tags or images of a similar style.<sup>28</sup> The importance of the link is well established in the annals of graffiti history: by the mid-seventies, New York City's Transit Police had archived thousands of tags in a file which officers likened to finger print records.<sup>29</sup>

A tension emerged in the interviews between two distinct, yet interrelated, orders of knowledge about urban spaces. First, the images encourage viewers to become more aware of their habitual movements and itineraries. Satirical images inhabiting cross walks, hiding near cars, and appearing on street corners foreground mobile, spatial, and

experiential knowledge. The stencils also incite viewers to adopt a critical approach toward conventions governing uses of urban sites by encouraging the development of personal interpretations unleashing a free play of multiple, diverging readings. However, the answers given by Gibson also shed light on an order of authoritarian knowledge deployed by law enforcement during the strategic policing and surveillance of public space. The story of the arrest and the hunt for the “link” constitute a peripatetic, empirical urban epistemology viewing the city as an entity that can be partially mastered through the careful detection and cataloguing of signs and facts. Street art’s pictorial geography generates a collection of material fragments which point to the paths and gestures of artists/vandals. To the police, the stencilled imprints are the residual traces of acts of vandalism, along with miscellaneous “subcultural discards” found at tagging sites. Such refuse, including markers, spray paint cans, trails of paint, and cigarettes, is a typical by-product of graffiti activity and provides clues for police on the trail of a crew.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, the mobile work of investigating the Roadsworth stencils displayed the limits of law enforcement’s mastery over the contingencies of urban space and the frustrating ephemerality of street art. Repeated forays into the streets would have been necessary to locate images produced in unexpected venues and spot stencils obstructed by parked cars or seamlessly integrated with traffic lines. Hence, chance discovery and surprise undermined attempts to generate an

all-encompassing record of the various stencils dotting the roads. Gathering knowledge about the images was gradual and accretive, offering partial glimpses into the creative world of the artist/criminal.

Despite justifying Gibson’s position, the interviews betray an ambiguous perspective toward power dynamics in urban spaces. While ostensibly legitimizing the artist’s personal insights, art work, and furtive, pre-dawn working habits, the interlocutors’ persistent queries about the arrest and the police investigation emphasized the inner workings of institutional power. The answers



Photo courtesy of Zeke’s Gallery, Montreal.

Fig. 5. Hatch cover on sidewalk corner.

elicited from the artist confirmed the ability of the police to root out vandals and tenaciously uphold the City’s anti-spray paint policies. Thus,

the interviews confer upon the artist a tenuous aura of authority inevitably subjected to the greater authority of the law. In dwelling upon street art's criminality, the interviews' defence of the Roadsworth stencils refrains from a direct critique of the enforcement of municipal power.

### **Arresting Imagery: Stencils and Scratchiti**

In contrast to the interviews' focus on the artist's run-in with the police, columns by art critics divulged Gibson's conflict with the power of City Hall. From his arrest to his sentencing, critics from a few local newspapers steadfastly upheld the legality of Gibson's artistic interventions in the streets.<sup>31</sup> *Le Devoir*, a Francophone paper appealing to educated, white-collar readers, published the most consistent and detailed coverage of the story. In a series of articles from December, 2004, to July, 2006, art critics Bernard Lamarche and Louise-Maude Rioux Soucy denounced the municipal government for wrongfully arresting the artist. Both authors repeatedly called for an acquittal on the grounds that the stencils were genuine artworks and not illegal graffiti vandalism. Consequently, the critics' language counters the judicial, bureaucratic, and administrative authority of city government by privileging artistic prerogatives over by-laws and police investigations. *Le Devoir* defended the artist by constructing a mutually exclusive opposition between the Roadsworth stencils and graffiti tags. Recurring throughout the critics' writings, this rhetorical strategy insisted upon the

supposed incompatibility between the stencils' artistic worth, on one hand, and graffiti's illegibility and crude style, on the other. According to such logic, art cannot be a crime, a principle which *Le Devoir* accused politicians and the police of ignoring. An article of December 14, 2006, summarized the critics' position in a quote from Chris Hand, owner of Zeke's Gallery, who claimed that whereas graffiti vandalism deserved a suitable punishment in proportion to the crime committed, penalizing art would be reprehensible.<sup>32</sup>

Parsing the terminology used by art critics unveils a broader debate about the definition of an unlawful artistic intervention in the streets. This language emphasized the processes of criminal and aesthetic acts: the titles and contents of six columns by Lamarche and Rioux Soucy heralded Roadsworth as a legitimate "street artist," while demoting graffiti tags to the pejorative category of "scratchiti."<sup>33</sup> Less common than the term "graffiti," scratchiti's etymological origins denote a particularly debased and reviled form of vandalism. Arising during the 1990s in New York City, scratchiti describes the rampant use of razor blades, pocket knives, coins, and keys to crudely incise one's name into the windows and walls of subway cars.<sup>34</sup> Invoking the damage left by scratchiti, Lamarche argued that the overwhelming number of charges against Gibson would have been more apt for a vandal who had etched a name into store front windows than an artist who had merely painted pictures.<sup>35</sup> The word "scratchiti" likens writing or doodling in outdoor spaces to an abrasive injury or

physical attack upon the city's materiality. Evoking gestures of cutting and gashing into a vulnerable surface, scratchiti leaves visible scars that must be remedied by costly, time-consuming cleaning and maintenance. As a result, vandalism is affiliated with the physical and moral defiling of the city's public image and wellbeing.

In contrast to the physical abrasiveness and aesthetic impoverishment attributed to scratchiti, the critics' discourse legitimized street art stencils for their unobtrusive, temporary engagement with the surface of the road. Stencils, dubbed *pochoirs* in French, leave an ephemeral imprint heavily subjected to the wear and tear of traffic and weather. Lamarche was quick to point out that Roadsworth never painted on buildings or private property; in the critic's opinion, this careful choice of locations and techniques irrevocably separated Roadsworth from "ordinary graffiti writers,"<sup>36</sup> "folk devils" blighting the postmodern city.<sup>37</sup> Rather than inflicting injury, these stencils enhanced the city. Lamarche's emphasis on local sites boasting Roadsworth's colourful icons suggests that the stencillings drew positive publicity to the city. Furthermore, the news articles' designation of Roadsworth as an artist who paints on flat surfaces ironically validates non-mainstream street art through a comparison with established practices of painting on canvases or walls. Such reasoning implies that the boundary between crime and art separates harmful intrusions lacking cultural value from benign, legitimate interventions

stemming from established artistic precedents.

Although the critics addressed the gestures and processes which create illicit art in public spaces, the content of street art and graffiti must also be acknowledged. Observing the general absence of obscenity from tags and "pieces,"<sup>38</sup> literary scholar Susan Stewart aptly notes that "It is important to remember that the crime of graffiti is a crime in mode of production. Unlike pornography, graffiti is not a crime of content."<sup>39</sup> The art critics' writings seemingly exemplify Stewart's prioritizing of modes of production over content. Lamarche and Rioux Soucy criticized the violence of scratchiti to valorize the harmless ephemerality of stencilling as a form of painting. Nevertheless, a preoccupation with the contents of tags and stencils underpins the critics' concern with the acts of marking public space. The authors' denigration of graffiti implicitly reduces the semiotic significance of tags to the meaninglessness and illegibility of anonymous scribbles. While vacating tags of linguistic and cultural meaning, critics embraced the legibility of the Roadsworth images of recognizable, everyday objects, plants, and creatures that elicit varying interpretations from viewers.

The accessible visual appeal and strategic placement of the stencils fuel a subversive counterattack against the official order imposed on the streets. Although the critics refuted the illegality of Gibson's work, they acknowledged his engagement with the political power of images. The artist's tongue-in-

cheek works undermined the functionalism of street markings by eccentrically and humourously reconfiguring existing lines originally intended to coordinate and order the direction and rhythm of vehicles and pedestrians. Gibson transformed the streetscape through the superimposition of images from popular culture and everyday life onto the rational, linear grid of the streets. This juxtaposing of eclectic pictures with the City's stripes warps the official urban fabric. Undermining the roads' legibility and traffic by-laws, the works therefore critique governmental control of public space. As Gibson articulated, "I look at the street as a language—it's very authoritarian, very direct, so it also provides a good starting point for satire. Any time something is dry, functional, and humourless, it invites satire."<sup>40</sup> Many of the stencils make overt political references to the policing and ordering of space. The security camera targeting passers-by on the sidewalk (fig. 2) and the coolly watchful owl (fig. 4) hint at the ubiquity of surveillance technologies and practices in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century metropolis. Both the submarine hatch cover on a street corner (fig. 5) and the cowboy's lasso roped onto a manhole (fig. 3) suggest an iconography of macho conquerors and defenders of hostile places and frontiers. Meanwhile, the velvet rope (fig. 6) evokes the exclusionary boundaries that strictly regulate entry to upscale nightspots and cultural venues, whereas the barbed wire (fig. 7) conjures up a far more sinister, authoritarian barrier found in prisons, gulags, and death camps.

However, the critics' columns also

depoliticized the visual content and impact of the stencils. Lamarche's use of aestheticizing descriptive terms diminished the stencils into banal, therefore innocuous, decorations. He praised the spray-painted pictures for "prettifying" and "ornamenting" the roads, concluding that these attractive, stylized works exude a classicist aesthetic.<sup>41</sup> Such terms weaken the images' capacity to provoke meaningful dialogues about uses of public space. Furthermore, the critic's invocation of classicism lodges urban art within a tradition of institutionally sanctioned, mainstream, Western academic art associated with the tastes and ideologies of the privileged bourgeoisie.

Meanwhile, the content of the stencils is interrelated with the particularities of physical sites. Gibson's assault upon the functionality, banality, and regulation of urban space occurred within overlooked, interstitial zones, including intersections, junctions, crossings, and parking spots. Thus, Roadsworth's street art disrupted traffic circuits at points where cars and people stop, commence moving, change direction, or profit from an expedient shortcut. Although merely sites of momentary pause and passage, these intersections proclaim the rules of the road through markings on the ground and nearby signs. Some of these sites unintentionally provide venues for more leisurely rituals of conversing, loitering, and people-watching. Above all, these are sites of encounters, voluntary and involuntary, amongst people. These are places of heightened awareness of



Fig. 6. Velvet rope on sidewalk, St. Lawrence.

the social conventions and legal codes which condition public behaviours and actions. Moreover, the stencils' infiltration of these places reveals that familiar avenues and boulevards are not only a web of physical sites to be navigated daily but can also provide a succession of discoveries and anomalies.

Consequently, the discourse of local critics framed Roadsworth's interventions in relation to the experiences of the individual. Their columns highlight the stencils' capacity to elicit psychological and critical responses from pedestrians and drivers to public spaces. For Lamarche, the stencils introduced a pleasurable surprise into the drudgery of the quotidian commute and thereby reorchestrated expectations, as well as visual and kinaesthetic experiences of the city. By infusing the unexpected into the habitual, the images opened the possibility of stimulating the sensitivity of urban

residents to their environment. Meanwhile, the critic contrasted the driver or pedestrian's enjoyable discovery of a stencil punctuating the banality of the road to the commuter's distaste at the aggression exuded by graffiti.<sup>42</sup> This focus on personal pleasure and entertainment therefore attempts to mitigate the criminality of stencilling the streets. *The Montreal Mirror*, a weekly, Anglophone alternative newspaper noted for its outspoken perspectives on local news and culture, also commended the stencils' inventive landscaping of the city's psychological topography. An article of December, 2004, hailed Roadsworth for "bringing some life onto Montreal's otherwise drab and potholed Plateau streets."<sup>43</sup> The article vaunted the cultural significance of the stencils by citing the artist's aim to "inject a little poetry" into "the banality and predictability [of] city life . . .

enhanced by urban planning and the way our movement is directed.”<sup>44</sup> Both content and placement of the images strove to effect social change by challenging viewers to reflect upon the regulations and surveillance strategies governing mobility within, and access to, public spaces.

The individual viewer remained the consistent point of reference for the critics who championed the cultural value of the stencils to Mile End, Mount Royal, and the city. As evidenced by the variety and accessibility of the spray-painted sites, the stencils did not single out a particular community associated with a geographical place, historical past or cultural origin. Neither did the images draw from a coherent, monolithic representation or narrative of city life circulated through official conduits. Instead, the stencils imply fluid definitions of community, neighbourhood, and audience. This instability of communal identity troubles what art historian Miwon Kwon refers to as “the common notion of the community as a . . . unified social formation,” a mythical entity that “often serves exclusionary and authoritarian purposes in the very name of the opposite.”<sup>45</sup>

Members of the press also underscored the support offered to Gibson by local artistic and legal circles. The *Mirror* and *Le Devoir* emphasized Chris Hand’s efforts to enlist the Canadian art community in a letter-writing campaign aimed at convincing the City to dismiss the charges. High profile human rights lawyer Julius Grey was also mentioned as one of the individuals consulted by Gibson following his arrest.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, Yves Sheriff,

assistant director of the Montreal theatre *Usine C* and affiliate of the *Cirque du Soleil*, wrote to Gérald Tremblay, Mayor of Montreal since 2001, to decry the charges against Gibson as damaging to the city’s reputation for cultural tolerance and bohemianism.<sup>47</sup>

By citing the opinions of the city’s arts community, the news media’s defence of the Roadsworth images strove to recuperate Montreal’s status in the international art world. Writing for *The Gazette*, Montreal’s largest and most popular English newspaper, T’cha Dunlevy urgently speculated what the outcome of Gibson’s case might convey about how art is perceived in “North America’s most European city.”<sup>48</sup> Invoking the global art world, Lamarche ranked Roadsworth’s oeuvre alongside the prolific and widely recognized urban stencil art of Paris, as well as examples of legally commissioned graffiti and street art in New York City.<sup>49</sup> This steadfast bolstering of street art’s legitimacy in Montreal dovetailed into the news media’s broader cultural agenda to promote the city as a liberal, tolerant, cultural hub that encourages unconventional art produced outside of official institutions. In their mission to reinforce Montreal’s location “on the art-world map,”<sup>50</sup> the critics’ affirmation of street art’s rightful legitimacy paradoxically drew from, and disseminated, the notoriety of the artist’s arrest. The criminal aura of images spray-painted on deserted streets by moonlight and the severity of the charges attracted national attention. Such publicity helped reduce the original charges to forty hours of community service spent

producing municipally commissioned stencil works in various boroughs. Gibson's sentence exposes the ambiguity underlying City Hall's vilification of illicit art. By dictating when and where the artist could work, the municipal government domesticated and co-opted Gibson's art. After the art critics addressed the municipal government by appealing to the artistic merit and content of the stencils, the City responded with punitive measures more intent on institutionalizing the production of street art rather than directly censoring or diluting the stencils' style and subversive imagery. Yet, this punishment also ironically fulfilled the art critics' fervent vindication of Gibson's work. Ensuring the public visibility and accessibility of the stencils, Gibson's community service projects prompted curators to request his participation in local exhibitions. In 2006, the Borough of Ville-Marie commissioned the artist to create stencils outside a subway station in Chinatown. That same year, the artist also stencilled a Mile End school playground.<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless, the newspapers' support for Gibson revealed a conflicted attitude toward urban art. To champion Roadsworth, the critics of *Le Devoir* and the *Mirror* adopted a totalizing, monolithic conflation of graffiti with scratchiti, while eliding the ideological and moralizing assumptions behind this antagonistic perspective. All forms of non-commissioned graffiti, regardless of location and style, were categorically denounced as lowbrow vandalism. From this undifferentiated mass of illicit markings in the streets, critics

singled out the Roadsworth stencils as genuine, inventive artworks, even though the artist worked with the same spray paints and in similar public locations as taggers. Whereas newspapers examined how the stencils targeted government control of urban space and satirized the rationality of urban planning, art critics denied the potential political force of tags and pieces. Gibson observed the ambivalence of the responses articulated by the news media and the artistic community, noting that those who defended his right to make art also contradicted themselves by denigrating graffiti writers, "the only ones who are exercising, in a real sense, their freedom of expression."<sup>52</sup>

### **Imaging the City**

The publicity garnered by Gibson's plight recalled the controversy surrounding the "Corridart" fiasco of 1976. As the host of that year's Summer Olympiad, Montreal organized an outdoor exhibition of large-scale sculptural installations by local artists. From June to July, the works were displayed in various locales to form a five mile "corridor of art" in the downtown area along Sherbrooke Street, the main artery of the city and the traditional route of public parades. The sudden decision of Mayor Jean Drapeau (in office 1954-57; 1960-86) to bulldoze the works to the ground before sunrise on the morning of July 15, 1976, provoked consternation and outrage from local and international artistic communities. In an official statement, Drapeau announced that the exhibition merited obliteration as it



defied public occupancy bylaws and created a hazard to public safety.<sup>53</sup> Disclosing his personal opinion, the Mayor dubbed the works “pollution” which had “turned the street into a dump.” Many of the installations resembled the dilapidated ruins of houses or archaeological digs, implicitly critiquing the City’s demolition of historical heritage sites during Drapeau’s administration.<sup>54</sup> The language employed by Drapeau to denigrate “Corridart” as well as the rigorous act of razing the installations in 1976 foreshadowed the City’s antagonism toward street art and graffiti during the 2000s. Articles from the *Mirror* and the *Gazette* paralleled the City’s overzealous treatment of Roadsworth with the Mayor’s repression of “Corridart.”<sup>55</sup>

As Gibson’s predicament and the fate of “Corridart” suggest, the display of municipal power regulates and disciplines how the visual arts and the built environment shape the official, public image and reputation of the city. Newspapers play a significant historical role as perpetrators of, and opponents to, images and ideals of urban space constructed by authorities and artists. In both 1976 and 2006, the press responded swiftly to the punitive actions of local officials by reporting on City Hall’s rejection of art that conflicted with the city’s normative, official image and overturned acceptable conventions for representing historic and current realities of urban space. Local and national newspapers from 1976 onward describe Mayor Drapeau’s visceral indictment of the exhibition as a dangerous, polluted, and unsightly wasteland flaunted before a

global audience during the Olympics. The artists, however, aimed to promote the city as a safe, welcoming cultural haven through outdoor installations that encouraged visitors and citizens alike to playfully explore and relax in public spaces.<sup>56</sup> Three decades later, art critics writing about Roadsworth forcefully pitted the importance of solidifying Montreal’s reputation as a liberal artistic venue against the authorities’ concern with maintaining cleanliness and order.

By undermining City Hall’s control over the image of the metropolis, artists and art critics crafted alternative visions of public space. The critics’ portrayal of the stencils’ reconfiguration of traffic routes resonates with what media scholar Steve Macek identifies as the symbolic powers of graffiti in news media coverage. By referring to Macek, my intention is neither to compare stencilling with graffiti nor to contrast newspaper journalism with Macek’s primary interest, television journalism. Rather, his discussion offers a revealing insight into how the presence of illicit urban art in the news shapes popular conceptions of cities. Macek’s analysis of the sociopolitical significance of urban visual expression notes the recurrence of graffiti as both subject matter and visual backdrop in much television news that furthered the ideologically conservative moral panic over crime in the American metropolis during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>57</sup> In reports on city crime, sites heavily plastered with tags and “pieces” function as icons for the plight of the disorderly inner-city infested with vandalism, narcotics trafficking, and gang rivalry.<sup>58</sup> As “artistic manifestations

of urban lawlessness,”<sup>59</sup> footage of seedy, graffiti-lined buildings and back alleys acts as a “generic signifier” of crime and violence.<sup>60</sup>

In Macek’s examples, the rhetoric of the evening news paints a bleak portrait of the postindustrial US city by highlighting spray paint’s capacity to “manifest” and “signify” a psychological and moral urban landscape pervaded by danger. Hence, news reporting decodes illicit scrawlings not only as sinister landmarks but also distress signals. The dystopic city emerges as both perpetrator and victim of crime. Urban art’s criminality derives less from any precise danger posed by vandalism than from graffiti’s general ties to illicit activity and the menacing atmosphere that tags convey to privileged, often suburban, citizens. Television journalism’s depiction of the psychological climate generated by graffiti evokes findings in Craig Castleman’s seminal social and historical survey of subway tagging in New York City during the seventies and early eighties: the staunch anti-graffiti campaign initiated by Ed Koch, City Mayor from 1978 to 1989, explicitly targeted vandalism for its discomfiting, fear-inducing impact on commuters.<sup>61</sup>

By the early 2000s, Montreal newspapers catalyzed an atmosphere of apprehension surrounding graffiti and street art. While many newspapers expressed support for Gibson, *The Montreal Gazette*, as well as newspapers from outside Quebec, closely followed the Montreal government’s crackdown on unsolicited markings in public space. A preoccupation with the

safety and cleanliness of the public image of residential and commercial districts motivated the programs inaugurated by City Hall. During the Roadsworth controversy, the battle against spray-paint was synonymous with two comrades in arms, Mayor Gérald Tremblay and his brother, Marcel Tremblay, the member of the Executive Committee responsible for the city’s public sanitation. In 2003, a year prior to Gibson’s arrest, the Mayor unleashed the opening salvo by initiating a strict new anti-graffiti campaign costing \$4.5-million, which aimed at removing existing graffiti and promoting education to prevent future vandalism.<sup>62</sup> The following year, similar projects were launched in Vancouver, Toronto, and New York City. Punishments included steeper fines and longer jail terms.<sup>63</sup> In 2006, Marcel Tremblay extended the scope of anti-graffiti policies and vehemently called for merchants to cease selling spray paint to minors. Otherwise, he queried, “How do we manage and find the best way to stop this madness, this sort of art?”<sup>64</sup> He also scornfully proposed that street artists be responsible for removing “their mess.”<sup>65</sup> Unlike the art critics defending Roadsworth, local politicians, bureaucrats, and many journalists did not differentiate the stencils from graffiti. New policies targeted all illicit inscriptions and imagery with equal force. Roadsworth’s prolific output and distinctive style distinguished him as a prime target. According to an article from *La Presse*, the City mercilessly pursued Roadsworth as a “*mégagraffiteur* who left his signature everywhere and deserved an exemplary punishment.”<sup>66</sup> As

Macek notes, hostile media depictions of graffiti heighten affluent viewers' biases against, and fears of, disadvantaged urban areas. Consequently, news coverage helps to boost the electoral platforms of conservative politicians promising to eradicate vandalism.<sup>67</sup>

As suggested by the emphasis placed by American television and Canadian newspapers on the strict upkeep of the city's image, unlawful art conflicts with political and corporate power. Policies against graffiti and street art enforce public order, spatial legibility, and cleanliness necessary to maintain the image of the postindustrial city as safe, prosperous, and economically viable. The

examples of New York and Montreal especially highlight the capitalist operations of municipal power. City officials routinely welcome corporately sponsored commercial imagery and texts in public space, despite the often offensive or manipulative nature of certain advertising media. In Montreal, abundant commercial imagery hawks consumer products and fashions. Amidst restaurants and clothing boutiques across the downtown area, sex-related businesses flaunt explicit images at street level. In contrast,

street art and tags use city space for non-lucrative ends. From the perspective of the authorities and the business community, spray-painted works are unprofitable ventures squandering and defacing valuable advertising space or real estate.

Despite the differences between their outlooks, the American and Montreal news media adopt a similar diagnostic reading of illegal urban art



Photo courtesy of Zeke's Gallery, Montreal.

Fig. 7. Barbed wire flanking pedestrian crosswalk, near intersection of Fairmount and Esplanade.

as the visible symptom of underlying political, social, and cultural conditions in public space. American footage of tag-emblazoned walls and news coverage of Montreal's street art underline that illegal urban visual culture is embedded within broader sociopolitical contexts and the agendas of municipal politicians and the police. Representations of the metropolis are thus under constant revision by politicians, communities, and media outlets. Macek posits that news coverage of graffiti constructs the city as both the site of crime and

an inherently flawed entity spawning lawlessness, therefore requiring firm control. Within news media discourses, the visual culture of the streets functions as the index, signifier, manifestation or visible lesion of the broader social decay afflicting contemporary urban life. Likewise, the writers of *Le Devoir* and the *Mirror* framed the sprightly Roadsworth stencils as emblematic symptoms of the health of the city's artistic culture that also allude to broader conflicts over urban space.

However, the articles defending Gibson suggest that his street art was more complex than a mere "generic signifier" of historically specific conditions and constructions of the city. The stencils are not only passively symptomatic of larger social and cultural contexts, but also actively reshape the urban environment. Whether deemed legitimate by art connoisseurs or declared illegal by the courts, street art challenges and alters the images, meanings, and perceptions conventionally associated with the city. *Le Devoir* and the *Mirror* presented street art as a complex response to, and critique of, normative visions and uses of urban space. Unlike the critical role accorded by news writers to the Roadsworth imagery, US crime reporting reduces graffiti to sinister scenery embedded within urban chaos; tags merge into a passive, though menacing, backdrop to frame a reporter addressing the camera. Far from offering a mere visual device, street art such as Gibson's elicits users of public space to engage in a performance. Roadsworth's aesthetic appropriation of the streets in two

adjacent boroughs implicated the perceptions and thoughts of an audience invited to interpret the images. The artist elaborated that these familiar, yet enigmatic, dislocated images engendered a socially conscious dialogue with viewers.<sup>68</sup> The logic of interpreting the stencils evokes a game in which the rules are continually reinvented.

In Montreal's history, the Roadsworth case remains one of the most publicized stories of illegal infringements by an artist upon the public's turf and the City's property. Questioning official uses and conventional ideals of urban space, local newspapers galvanized debates about the operations and abuses of municipal power. Often couched in ambivalent and conflicting perspectives on the relation between crime and art, the flurry of articles penned about Roadsworth shift between defusing and igniting street art's political charge.

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#### Notes:

All translations are by author unless otherwise noted.

1. Patrick Lejtenyi, "Roadsworth R.I.P.: Stencil Artist Peter Gibson Reflects on his Sudden Fame and the Death of his Alter Ego," *Montreal Mirror*, on-line archives, January 20-26, 2005, <http://www.montrealmirror.com/2005/012005/news2.html>.

2. Since Gibson, like most graffiti and stencil artists, worked under a pseudonym, I refer to the name Roadsworth when discussing the stencils. Within local newspapers, the stencils became synonymous

with this moniker. However, references to statements made by the artist following his arrest (when his real identity was exposed to the public) are attributed to Peter Gibson.

3. Jason Gondziola, "Art and Punishment: Local Stencil Artist Gets off Easy," *Montreal Mirror*, on-line archives, January 26-February 1, 2006, <http://www.montrealmirror.com/2006/012606/news2.html>.

4. See Jean Baudrillard, "Kool Killer ou l'insurrection par les signes," in *L'Échange symbolique et la mort* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 118-128 and Jacqueline Billiez, "Littérature de murailles urbaines: signes interdits vus du train," in *Des Écrits dans la ville. Sociolinguistique d'écrits urbains: l'exemple de Grenoble* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), 99-164.

5. For in-depth case studies of hip-hop graffiti in the United States and Europe, see the landmark text by Jeff Ferrell, *Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality* (New York: Garland, 1993), as well as Jesús de Diego, *Graffiti. La Palabra y la imagen: Un Estudio de la expresión en las culturas urbanas en el fin del siglo XX* (Barcelona: Los libros de la frontera, 2000), Nancy Macdonald, *The Graffiti Subculture: Youth, Masculinity and Identity in London and New York* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) and Bill Sanders, *Youth Crime and Youth Culture in the Inner City* (London: Routledge, 2005). Also see the well-illustrated tome by Susan A. Phillips, *Wallbanging: Graffiti and Gangs in L.A.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

6. Jeff Ferrell, "Freight Train Graffiti: Subculture, Media, Dislocation," in *Making Trouble: Cultural Constructions of Crime, Deviance and Control*, eds. Jeff Ferrell and Neil Websdale (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1999), 239.

7. For a useful overview of artists active in Montreal, see Emily Raine, "An Introduction to Street Art, Part I," in *Reading Montreal*, December 3, 2005, [http://readingcities.com/index.php/montreal/comments/an\\_introduction](http://readingcities.com/index.php/montreal/comments/an_introduction)

[\\_to\\_street\\_art/](#). Meanwhile, publications on Montreal graffiti include the following books co-authored by Jeanne Demers, Josée Lambert and Line McMurray, *Montréal graffiti bis* (Montreal: VLB Éditeur, 1988) and *Graffiti et Loi 101* (Montreal: VLB Éditeur, 1989). Paul Ardenne discusses politically-oriented street art in *Un art contextuel: Création artistique en milieu urbain, en situation, d'intervention, de participation* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002).

8. Gibson quoted in Jack Dylan, "The Streets Aren't Safe Anymore: The Roadsworth Interview," *Reading Montreal*, December 9, 2005, [http://readingcities.com/index.php/montreal/comments/the\\_---streets-\\_arent\\_safe\\_anymore\\_the\\_roadsworth\\_interview/](http://readingcities.com/index.php/montreal/comments/the_---streets-_arent_safe_anymore_the_roadsworth_interview/).

9. Lejtenyi, "Roadsworth R.I.P."

10. Bernard Lamarche, "Le peintre poète du macadam: Accusé de «méfaits publics», Roadsworth explique sa démarche artistique," *Le Devoir*, December 21, 2004, A1.

11. For an introduction to the importance of walking in contemporary art created in the outdoors, see John Beardsley, "The Ramble," in *Earthworks and Beyond: Contemporary Art in the Landscape*, 3rd ed. (New York: Abbeville Press, 1998), 40-57 and Colette Garraud, "Le corps comme outil et comme image," in *L'idée de nature dans l'art contemporain* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 22-31. .

12. Lamarche, "Le peintre poète du macadam," A1.

13. Peter Gibson quoted in Lamarche, "Le peintre poète du macadam," A1.

14. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 30-31.

15. de Certeau, 37.

16. Charles Mostoller, "Street Artist Sentenced to Stencil: 'Roadsworth' Talks Freedom of Expression, Public Space, and Why he Wants to Stick it to the Man," *McGill Daily*, on-line archives, February 6,

2006, <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/view.php?aid=4805>.

17. Gibson quoted in Dylan, "The Streets Aren't Safe Anymore."

18. de Certeau, 35-38.

19. Gibson quoted in Dylan, "The Streets Aren't Safe Anymore."

20. François Cardinal, "Illégal, l'art urbain ?" *La Presse*, January 8, 2005, A19.

21. Lamarche, "Le peintre poète du macadam," A1; Lejtenyi, "Roadsworth R.I.P."; Mostoller, "Street Artist Sentenced to Stencil"; Dylan, "The Streets Aren't Safe Anymore."

22. For a discussion of Andy Warhol's control over interviews, see Henry M. Sayre, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde since 1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 30-31. Also, see the following articles on the artist interview, published in *Art Journal* 64 (Fall 2005). Johanna Burton and Lisa Pasquariello, "'Ask Somebody Else Something Else': Analyzing the Artist Interview," 46-49; Gwen Allen, "Against Criticism: The Artist Interview in *Avalanche Magazine* 1970-76," 50-61; Suzanne Hudson, "Robert Ryman, Retrospective," 62-69; Tim Griffin, "Method-Acting: The Artist-Interviewer Conversation," 70-77.

23. Dylan, "The Streets Aren't Safe Anymore."

24. Mostoller, "Street Artist Sentenced to Stencil."

25. For scholarship incorporating lengthy interviews with taggers, see the work of Jeff Ferrell, Craig Castleman, Nancy Macdonald, Susan A. Phillips, Marie-Line Felonneau and Stéphanie Busquets.

26. Gibson quoted in Mostoller, "Street Artist Sentenced to Stencil."

27. Gibson quoted in Dylan, "The Streets Aren't Safe Anymore."

28. Dylan, "The Streets Aren't Safe Anymore."

29. Craig Castleman, *Getting Up: Subway Graffiti in New York* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 163

30. Jeff Ferrell, "Freight Train Graffiti," 233.

31. Many other newspapers either did not address the Roadsworth case or merely reported brief updates about the arrest and sentencing.

32. Chris Hand quoted in Bernard Lamarche, "Roadsworth, l'artiste de la rue, est arrêté," B8.

33. See the following articles by Bernard Lamarche, "Roadsworth, l'artiste de la rue, est arrêté," *Le Devoir* (Montreal), December 14, 2004, B8 ; "Un appui de taille pour Roadsworth," *Le Devoir*, December 16, 2004, B7 ; "Le peintre poète du macadam," A1; and by Louise-Maude Rioux Soucy, "L'artiste de la rue Roadsworth est absous," *Le Devoir*, January 18, 2006, B8 ; "Roadsworth retourne à l'école," *Le Devoir*, May 30, 2006, B8 and "Roadsworth sévit de nouveau . . . en toute légalité," *Le Devoir*, July 6, 2006, B8.

34. Clyde Haberman, "New Vandals Scratching up the Subways," *New York Times*, 26 January 1999, B1.

35. Lamarche, "Roadsworth, l'artiste de la rue, est arrêté," B8.

36. Lamarche, "Le peintre poète du macadam," A1.

37. For a sociological study of the "folk devil," see Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2002).

38. As the abbreviation of "masterpiece," the graffiti "piece" consists of an elaborate, large-scale, multi-coloured work incorporating the tags of individuals, as well as the initials comprising the title of the tagging crew. For a discussion of the production of pieces within the development of a tagger's career, see Macdonald, 80-85.

39. Susan Stewart, "Ceci tuera cela: Graffiti as Crime and Art," in *Life after Postmodernism: Essays on Value and Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 174.
40. Gibson quoted in Mostoller, "Street Artist Sentenced to Stencil."
41. Lamarche, "Le peintre poète du macadam," A1.
42. Lamarche, "Le peintre poète du macadam," A1.
43. Patrick Lejtenyi, "Roadsworth Busted," *Montreal Mirror*, on-line archives, December 9-15, 2004, <http://www.montrealmirror.com/2004/120901/front.html>.
44. Peter Gibson quoted in Lejtenyi, "Roadsworth R.I.P."
45. Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 7.
46. Lejtenyi, "Roadsworth Busted"; Lamarche, "Roadsworth, l'artiste de la rue, est arrêté," B8.
47. Lamarche, "Un appui de taille pour Roadsworth," B7.
48. T'cha Dunlevy, "Artistic Wink has Become an Urban Whirlwind," *The Montreal Gazette*, January 15, 2005, D1.
49. Lamarche, "Un appui de taille pour Roadsworth," B7 ; Lamarche, "Le peintre poète du macadam," A1.
50. Lejtenyi, "Roadsworth Busted."
51. Rioux Soucy, "Roadsworth sévit de nouveau . . . en toute légalité," B8 ; Rioux Soucy, "Roadsworth retourne à l'école," B8.
52. Lejtenyi, "Roadsworth R.I.P."
53. "Damage may Kill Corridart," *The Montreal Gazette*, July 16, 1976, A4.
54. Drapeau quoted in Richard Cleroux, "L'affaire Corridart: Junking Art for Olympics Lands Montreal in Court," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), November 17, 1980, A18. In direct contrast to the rundown, unfinished appearance of the "Corridart" works, Drapeau's urban aesthetic is exemplified by the colourful, hard-edged geometric décor commissioned for the stations of the "metro" subway system which his administration launched in 1966. See Brian McKenna and Susan Purcell, *Drapeau* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1980), 138-140.
55. Lejtenyi, "Roadsworth R.I.P."; Dunlevy, "Artistic Wink has Become an Urban Whirlwind," D1.
56. For an extended historical overview of the individual works presented at "Corridart," see Sandra Paikowsky, *CORRIDART Revisited: 25 ans plus tard*, exhibition catalogue: 12 July-18 Aug. 2001 (Montreal: Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery, 2001). Also, see Hélène Lipstadt and Michèle Picard, "Corridart, Public Space Destroyed and Remembered," *Architecture and Ideas* (Autumn 1998): 76-91.
57. Steve Macek, *Urban Nightmares: The Media, the Right and the Moral Panic Over the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xv.
58. Macek, 158.
59. Macek, 169.
60. Macek, 225.
61. Castleman, 176.
62. "City Hall Aims to Wipe Out Graffiti," *The Montreal Gazette*, June 21, 2003, A6.
63. Unnati Gandhi, "Montreal Goes on the Offensive Against Graffiti," *The Montreal Gazette*, August 25, 2004, A6.
64. Marcel Tremblay quoted in "Quebec: Montreal Mulls Spray Paint Ban," *The Ottawa Citizen*, August 8, 2006, A4.
65. Henry Aubin, "Urban Blight: The Mayor

Has a Good Idea: Make Graffiti 'Artists'  
Clean up Their Mess," *The Montreal  
Gazette*, October 7, 2006, B7.

66. Nicolas Bérubé, "Art urbain:  
Roadsworth s'en tire à bon compte," *La  
Presse* (Montreal), January 19, 2006, A5.

67. Macek, 225.

68. Lamarche, "Le peintre poète du  
macadam," A1.