

CHERRY RIVER'S WETLANDS: AN UNINTENTIONALLY CREATED ECOSCAPE

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Abstract

This study examines the various meanings the term *landscape* harbors as an interdisciplinary cultural agent, and its long established traditional role as a manifestation of dominant cultural values and interests, both visually and materially. Focusing on the Eastern Townships' Lake Memphremagog region and the relatively small, yet dynamically charged, wetland referred to as *Le Marais de la Rivière aux Cerises*, this research traces the designated zone's shifting significance to the surrounding area, beginning with its unintentional creation during the late 19th century's industrially prosperous era.

Résumé

Cette étude examine les multiples significations que le terme paysage suscite en tant qu'agent culturel interdisciplinaire et son rôle traditionnel bien établi d'une manifestation, à la fois visuelle et matérielle, de valeurs et d'intérêts dominants d'un point de vue culturel. Axée sur la région du Lac Memphrémagog dans les Cantons de l'Est et, plus particulièrement, le Marais de la Rivière aux Cerises, un endroit relativement restreint mais dynamique, cette recherche suit l'importance changeante de cette zone par rapport à son environnement commençant par sa création involontaire à la fin du 19^e siècle.

Introduction

Landscape studies have traditionally preoccupied, until relatively recently, the art historical and art critical fields. Landscapes have covered tremendous theoretical ground since the 18th century aesthetic dictums informed the western world's methods of appreciating them relative to theories of the beautiful, sublime, and picturesque. According to environmental aesthetics scholar Allen Carlson, this period "firmly entrenched landscapes rather than works of art as

the central focus of aesthetic theory as the paradigmatic objects of aesthetic experience.”¹ He adds that “the picturesque gradually became, throughout the nineteenth century, the dominant idea concerning the appreciation of landscapes.”² Yet, as anthropologist Tim Ingold points out, to this day “we are accustomed, by the conventions of modern society, to describe our experience of landscape as though we were viewing a picture.”³ Ingold, perceives landscape as a story, a story based on and imbedded in history. He maintains that landscape cultivates meanings, but it is not a space to which meanings can be attached.⁴ Given the term landscape’s apparent ease and frequency with which it slips from one discipline into another, as a research topic it has become highly accessible through the methods of both visual and material cultural studies. Prevalent dichotomies inherent to the term enhance its cultural meaningfulness with a vibrancy fraught with tension. Common antinomies include landscape as narrative or picturesque, familiar or foreign, cultivated or wild. It is spiritual and commercial, venerated and exploited. It includes imaginary and physical space; it is considered in both spatial and temporal terms. Landscapes are universal and personal, collective and individual. In *Landscape and Power* W.J.T. Mitchell summarily defines landscape as “a natural scene mediated by culture. It is both a represented and presented space, both a signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package.”⁵

Landscape research raises awareness about the environment, aesthetics, nature, history, heritage, and countless other contemporary concerns. For example, geographer David Lowenthal and art historian W.J.T. Mitchell agree landscape defines identity. The geographer maintains that “each people treasures physical features felt to be distinctively their own. Landscapes are compelling symbols of national identity.”⁶ The art historian, however, examines “the way landscape circulates as a medium of exchange, a site of visual appropriation, a focus for the formation of identity.”⁷ Landscapes are occasionally sublime or intellectual. They often refer to either imaginary or physical spaces. They are at once universal and personal, collective and private. This diverse and extensive scope seems to counter Mitchell’s claim that “landscape remains relatively underanalyzed.”⁸ Given the term’s current cross-disciplinary appeal and multiple cultural meanings, this study apprehends “landscape” conceptually, both spatially and temporally, while situating it relative to existing scholarship. Many disciplines now include landscape topics within their curriculums. Using the term “landscape” as a keyword search within Bishop’s University’s John Bassett library, and then sorting the

results chronologically, a striking pattern emerged. Of the 260 listed publications, prior to the 1980s the overwhelming majority of titles referred to landscape in either artistic or aesthetic terms. Post 1980 publications concerned with landscapes explode beyond the fine arts discipline into divergent fields including anthropology, geography, biology, sociology, economics, environmental studies, and many others.

This study on the city of Magog Quebec's Marais de la Rivière aux Cerises, hereafter referred to as Le Marais, thus endeavours to present this particularly fascinating landscape as a unique space that has evolved beyond the traditional, and still popular, way of approaching landscapes as "scenic" views, into a thriving three dimensional natural environment. It also calls attention to the historical shift in cultural attitudes towards the landscape, as it underscores how collective identities are indelibly linked to the land, whether on a national, regional, or even municipal level. Clearly, as Mitchell points out, the landscape "exerts a subtle power over people, eliciting a broad range of emotions and meanings that may be difficult to specify."⁹ Despite this difficulty, the landscape is, for better or worse, the setting in which histories unfold and heritages are cultivated. Mitchell does specify that "whatever the power of landscape might be, and of its unfoldings into space and place, it is surely the medium in which we live, and move, and have our being, and where we are destined, ultimately, to return."¹⁰

Encompassing the everyday to the extraordinary, landscapes reflect any period's dominant cultural values, throughout history. Once the seeds of a nation's identity take root, the landscape becomes an indelible symbol of that maturing identity, both visually through its representations, and materially through its sustainability. Art historian Simon Schama stresses how "national identity [...] would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition."¹¹ Adding to the enduring tradition of enriching the landscape as a homeland, he maintains that "before it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock."¹²

Given the term's expansiveness, which grows exponentially with each subsequent decade, one questions what component of landscape precisely, according to Mitchell, "remains under analyzed." His statement nonetheless prompts reflection that elicits an array of questions including the following: should an uninhabited landscape be referred to as a landscape, or does it become a natural space, or wilderness? To what extent are the terms landscape, nature, environment, and wilderness interchangeable? What roles do time,

nature, humans, labor, leisure, tourism, and the economy play in our contemporary perceptions of landscape? For whom, and in what ways, did landscape fulfill modernity's nation building agenda? How do environmental priorities alter the landscape? Although the purpose of this study is not intended to engage with such questions directly, they nonetheless inform the direction it takes. This essay does consider, more specifically, the various roles and meanings the term landscape holds for the Lake Memphremagog region through an analysis of Le Marais, a vibrant and diverse wetland ecosystem within the Eastern Townships of Quebec. The Quebec government has recently acknowledged that it has become globally recognized that wetlands, once perceived as virtually useless, play an equally important role as agricultural land and forests, advocating how "les biens et services écologiques qu'ils procurent à la société représentent indéniablement un moteur pour l'économie locale, régionale, nationale et mondiale. Il est donc primordial de conserver ces milieux, particulièrement dans les régions où les développements urbains ont contribué à leur dégradation ou à leur disparition."¹³ It is worth noting that approximately 10% of the province's overall territory, amounting to 170 000 km², is now categorized as wetland terrain.

The region's historical development

Following the United States' war of independence, several New England's Loyalists settled around the banks of Lake Memphremagog in search of new opportunities. The most prominent was Nicholas Austin who received the Township of Bolton on the lake's west bank to colonize as a reward for his loyalty to the British Crown. He soon relocated to the east bank, drawn by the lake's resourceful natural outlet that drains into the Magog River, making use of the waterway's current to establish the area's first saw and flour mills.¹⁴ The small community was thus named The Outlet in recognition of this point, precisely where Lake Memphremagog funnels into the Magog River. In 1799 Ralph Merry III purchased the mills from Austin, enhancing their productivity to such an extent that he was recognized as the settlement's official founder.¹⁵ As one of the country's greatest resources during the early industrial era, particularly throughout Quebec, the rivers were promoted early on by Eastern Township politicians and merchants eager to advance the region's economic development. As early as 1845 the area's first textile mill, the Magog Manufacturing Co., opened for business along the Magog River, an ideal location due to its current's proven capacity to generate power. By 1849 the Township of Magog was established, permanently changing the community's name from The Outlet to Magog. An aggressive fire destroyed the

original buildings in 1857. The mill eventually reopened in 1875 only to shut again after a few short years.¹⁶ Undeterred by the previous mill owner's failure, William Hobbs, Alvin Head Moore and Deputy Charles Colby secured the waterway rights in 1881 from the British American Land Company for a period of 25 years, on behalf of a renewed Magog Manufacturing Co.¹⁷ The three partners transformed the older company, changed its name to the Magog Cotton & Print Co., and eventually incorporated it in 1883, making it "the largest joint stock enterprise ever undertaken in the Townships"¹⁸ and "the only calico printing plant in Canada."¹⁹ Barbara Austin's research on the Dominion Textiles Corporation describes how the textile industry in Canada began with men who "were seeking to circumvent British control of the cotton trade in Canada by setting up domestic manufacturing facilities,"²⁰ no doubt motivated to assert its autonomy as a young confederation. It was at this time that the factory built its first dam on the Magog River that would cause the wetland's water levels to significantly rise.²¹

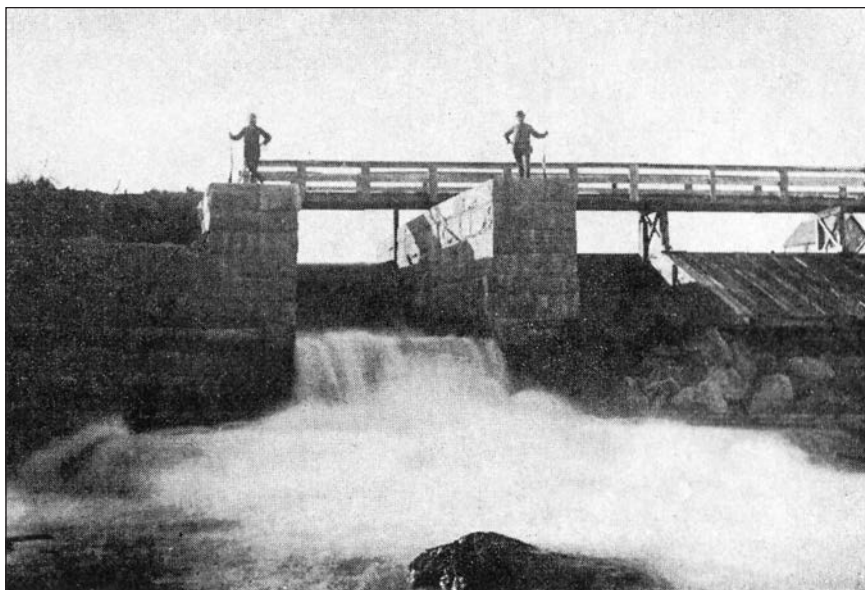


Figure 1. Magog's First Dam.
Commercial and Industrial Story of Magog, Quebec, 41.

By 1887 the factory employed 150 workers and produced 6 million yards of fabric, an output which represented 25% of the total printed cotton consumed in Canada.²² The next year, due in large part to the factory's success, the Township of Magog was raised to the municipal status of Village, and eventually graduated to the City of Magog in

1890.²³ By 1907 Magog's factory had "become the largest calico print works on the continent, with the Magog label on fabrics carrying its [n]ame to every corner of the world."²⁴ (Figure 2) As such the City of Magog, like several other industrial cities throughout Quebec, was permanently settled due to two main waterways, the Magog River and Lake Memphremagog. The towns or cities that emerged during the first wave of industrialization between 1850–1890, such as Magog, were characterized by an organic, spontaneous growth which developed in tandem with the Company's progress, unlike later patriarchal "Company Towns" which were rigorously structured and systematically planned. As one historian pointed out, in Magog "one thing became plain; as the textile industry thrived in the future, so would thrive Magog [...] Both municipality and manufacturer had come to see that they must progress and develop together."²⁵ It was thus in this way that the city's identity was inextricably tied to the manufacturing industry, which in turn relied on the territory's waterways.



Figure 2. Photograph of the Magog Textile Mill. Courtesy of the Eastern Township Research Center, (P042 Newton Brookhouse fonds).

During the middle of the 19th century, however, Magog had also become known as a summer resort and tourist destination, attracting some of Montreal's wealthiest citizens including Sir Hugh Allan, the

Redpath family, the Gaults, and the Molsons who “bought land and erected buildings”²⁶ along the eastern banks of Lake Memphremagog. The families and guests of these elite industrialists enjoyed many leisurely summers on their vast estates. In 1867, the year of Canada’s confederation, Allan launched his 167 foot passenger steamer *The Lady of the Lake* on Memphremagog which sailed until 1917 (figure 3). This paddle-wheel steamship was licensed to carry more than 600 passengers at a time, accommodating travellers and vacationers between Magog and Newport twice daily as it stopped at villages and various landings along the way.²⁷ At the turn of the century an admirer of the area wrote how “no lake in Northern Vermont, or along the Canadian Frontier, is more beautiful in appearance, attractive in scenic effects, better suited to the wants of the tourist, or is more accessible by highway or rail than is Lake Memphremagog, or the ‘Geneva of Canada’, as it is frequently and appropriately called.”²⁸ Industrialization’s steam engine technology revolutionized our perceptions of the landscape by enhancing its accessibility and diversifying its resourcefulness.

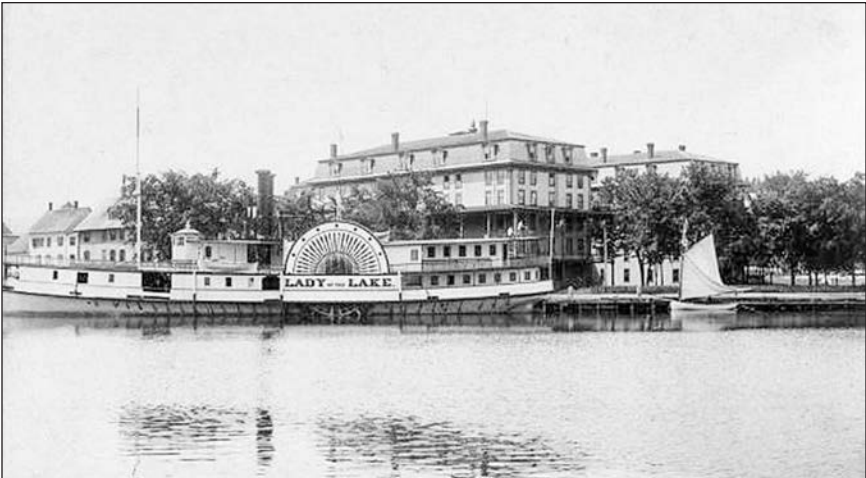


Figure 3. Lady of the Lake (1867–1917): This photograph from the 1880s is of Sir Hugh Allan’s famous sidewheeler, docked next to the Memphremagog House on Lake Memphremagog in Newport, Vermont.

Magog & Lake Memphremagog—A beautiful region to discover!

[www.magogquebec.ca/wp-content/gallery/historical/](http://www.magogquebec.ca/wp-content/gallery/historical/boats-lady-of-the-lake-5.jpg)

[boats-lady-of-the-lake-5.jpg](http://www.magogquebec.ca/wp-content/gallery/historical/boats-lady-of-the-lake-5.jpg), consulted on December 20, 2013.

Lake Memphremagog and Le Marais de la Rivière aux Cerises

Le Marais is located across Route 112 from the northern shore of Lake Memphremagog, situated between the city of Magog and Mount Orford National Park. Lake Memphremagog is a rather narrow lake

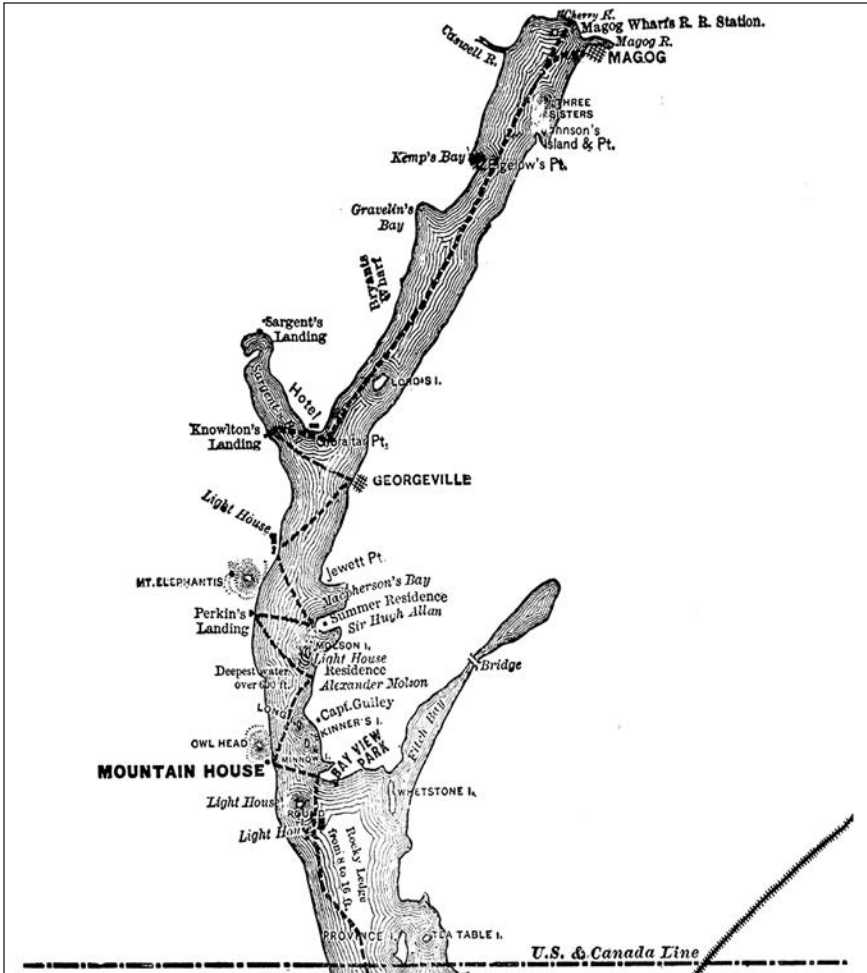


Figure 4. Lake Memphremagog on Canadian side of border.
 Hildreth, D.W. Beautiful Memphremagog.
 Newport: The Express & Standard, 1905. np.

that is approximately fifty kilometres long and irregularly shaped. It is reputed to have “the longest stretch of navigable water in the Eastern Townships.”²⁹ (Figure 4) The majority of its overall surface area is located in Quebec, although it is an international body of water, given that its southern shore is situated in Newport, Vermont where four state rivers pour directly into it, providing 71% of the lake’s inflow. The MRC’s Cherry River (Rivière aux Cerises) supplies the remaining 29%. The lake drains, on the northern side of the border, into Magog River at the point which inspired the settlement’s original name, The Outlet, as previously noted. In light of its international value “the governments

of Vermont and Québec, signed an Environmental Cooperation Agreement on Managing the Waters of Lake Memphremagog in September 1989."³⁰ It is currently recognized as "the largest body of water in the Estrie region. Its water quality is a major regional concern due to the fact that this lake is the source of drinking water for nearly half of the region's population and offers a unique potential for recreational and vacationing use in Québec."³¹ Given that the lake occupies such a prominent role in the local population's current everyday lives and the city's historical development, it is considered as the heart of Magog, both materially as a natural and recreational resource, and visually as a popular and picturesque tourist magnet.

Le Marais is directly linked to Lake Memphremagog, as it first intercepts the water flow from Cherry River into the lake. Given its location between the lake and river it serves a vital function that contributes to the lake's water quality, which will be discussed further shortly. Le Marais is, quite literally, a three dimensional organic landscape of shifting perspectives, diverse ecosystems, and seasonal changes that autonomously characterize its formidable natural territory (figure 5). This wetland naturally originated during the last glacial age, although it was further transformed, unintentionally, into its current state largely due to human activities that commenced during the 18th century era, when mill owner Nicholas Austin erected the first dam in 1797, at the lake's northern outlet.³² The human circumstances contributing to the marsh's creation call to mind philosopher Félix Guattari's 'new ecosophical logic', by paralleling "the manner in which an artist may be led to alter his work after the intrusion of some accidental detail, an event-incident that suddenly makes his initial project bifurcate."³³ Guattari emphasizes how "there is a proverb 'the exception proves the rule', but the exception can just as easily deflect the rule, or even recreate it."³⁴ Magog's Marais is a material embodiment of such an exception, precisely as the resulting "accidental" side-effect of an "event-incident" that began during modernity's industrial period. The site eventually transformed again



Figure 5. Scenes from Le Marais de la Rivière aux Cerises. 2013. Digital Photograph Montage. Caroline Beaudoin.

during the mid twentieth century when it became the municipality's unofficial, yet regularly used, garbage dump for over two decades.

A combination of natural and collateral events mutually contributed to the formation and history of the wetland territory presently known throughout the region as Le Marais. Beginning in 1883 the textiles factory built its first dam, causing the lake's water levels to rise which in turn spilled over to the wetlands bordering la Rivière aux Cerises. Secondly, in 1877 railway tracks were laid by the Magog & Waterloo Railway Company cutting right through a portion of Le Marais' present territory. In order to properly level the tracks, the company had to adequately reinforce them by creating huge embankments of landfill which caused the wetland's water levels to deepen in certain areas. A decade later, in 1887, the Canadian Pacific Railways purchased the Magog & Waterloo Railway to add to their expanding trans-continental line, subsequently shifting the tracks to the south due to concerns regarding the marsh's fluctuating water levels (figure 6). In a 1905 publication entitled *Beautiful Memphremagog*, the author, in his earnestness to promote the region to would-be travellers, explains that "when modern enterprise struck the place, resulting principally through the erection of the Dominion Cott[o]n Textile Co.'s mills and the advent of the Sherbrooke section of the Canadian Pacific railroad



Figure 6. 1930 aerial photograph of Cherry River. Courtesy of LAMRAC. This photo illustrates the trace of original track line curving through the heart of Le Marais, as well as CPR's 1887 relocated line situated between the original track and hwy 112.

into the town, it leaped into prominence, and increased in population until it now stands as one of the thriving towns of the frontier."³⁵ Progress and prosperity were deeply entrenched cultural values during the industrial era. Indeed, they were so important to Magog's development that they were the featured motto on the municipality's coat of arms from 1890 to 1950. The landscape was perceived either in terms of its natural resources, or in terms of its beautiful and picturesque scenery. By 1897 the City of Magog, in partnership with the textiles manufacturing company, jointly built its first hydroelectric dam which subsequently caused the marshland area to double in size. After a 60 ft. length of the original stone and wood dam collapsed following heavy rains in 1915, a stronger concrete dam and new brick hydroelectric facility, still in use today, were completed in 1920. Gradually the lake's water level stabilized and by 1930 the marshland reached, and has ever since, maintained its current water level. Since 1930 however, the wetland's overall surface area has decreased by 30% primarily due to urban development.³⁶

Although human activity inadvertently contributed to the marsh's permanence in 1877, from 1950 and 1971 it conversely threatened the terrain's integrity. The area closest to Chemin Roy was commonly used as an unofficial municipal garbage dump, effectively reducing the marshland to a literal wasteland for just over two decades. When LAMRAC (Les Amis de la Rivière aux Cerises) was first founded in 1997, it took the association two years to remove over sixty tons of accumulated waste from the land. Following the cleanup campaign, Le Marais became accessible to the public in 2000. Recently, during the fall 2012, over ten more tons of waste were removed from the area by a group of local volunteers.³⁷ A spokesperson for the group has estimated that between five and ten more similar cleaning campaigns will be required in order to further restore the integrity of Le Marais' diverse ecosystem. The wetland currently consists of four different and distinct natural environments including swamp, marsh, forest, and peat bog. The distinction made between swamp, bog, or marsh is based on the measured depth of water in any given area. The site is accessible to human visitors by trail and boardwalk throughout the year, and kayak or canoe prior to the region's winter freeze. LAMRAC'S website proudly offers visitors "le plus long réseau de sentiers sur pilotis au Québec et [est] le seul milieu humide offrant un site entièrement accessible à l'année," adding that "le Marais est une destination de choix pour la population locale et touristique."³⁸ Without Le Marais' boardwalk, the site would have remained impenetrable by foot in much of the area due to the density of growth in deep water areas surrounding the river, confirming that indeed "man-made elements

in the wetland micro-landscape, such as a boardwalk on a bog mat [...] may even promote visual, recreational, and educational values by providing access to an otherwise restricted and extremely delicate area."³⁹ Le Marais' trails and boardwalk were carefully designed by a biologist and a geographer who adapted the trajectory in deference to the surrounding natural environment to ensure minimal disturbance to the wetland's fragile ecosystem. The wetland is currently home to 363 kinds of plants, trees and flora, 151 types of birds, 14 species of reptiles and amphibians, 24 types of mammals, and 23 varieties of fish. In order to monitor the ecosystem's diversity and safeguard its integrity, an updated inventory of the territory's various species is undertaken every five years.⁴⁰

The marsh's practical ecological function amplifies its apparent aesthetic value. If Lake Memphremagog is perceived as the heart of Magog, then Le Marais must be regarded as its kidneys. Because the marsh is strategically situated between the two bodies of water, and contiguous to both, it functions as a vital organ that contributes to the community's well being by preliminarily processing its main water supply. The marsh essentially filters the water flowing from Cherry River before it funnels into Lake Memphremagog. Considering the lake's resourcefulness as a supplier for a significant portion of the region's drinking water, Le Marais' vitality as a natural purifying filtration system for the lake basin is an essential contributor to the region's environmental quality.

LAMRAC

In 1989 a group of citizens, with the support from two local municipal governments, obtained sufficient provincial funding from the Fondation de la faune du Québec to secure the purchase of 90 of the wetland's 150 hectares. The acquired space was classified as a "public park."⁴¹ By 1997 LAMRAC was founded and entrusted to manage the site; the association's most pressing initial objective was to decontaminate the area that had served as the area's garbage dump for 21 years. LAMRAC's current mission and the various governments' encouraging support demonstrate the benefits that can be realized when potential methods advocated by Guattari ultimately "enable the singular, the exceptional, the rare, to coexist with a State structure that is the least burdensome possible,"⁴² on a daily basis. LAMRAC's mandate is to manage the wetland's many activities and terrain, in addition to maintaining its various installations. As part of its mission the association values innovation, creativity, and respect for the territory's natural environment. It endorses social responsibility and engagement through a commitment to several educational programs.

It also strives to promote and preserve the wetland's overall terrain, as it pursues further development of Le Marais' ecological, cultural, and tourism interests.⁴³ LAMRAC welcomes more than 120 000 visitors per year, of which the majority are residents of Magog-Orford who enjoy the site's trails and boardwalks. Additionally, "les groupes scolaires, les camps de jour et les centres de la petite enfance fréquentent également le site du Marais sur une base régulière. Les touristes de passage, des familles notamment, constituent également une masse non négligeable des visiteurs."⁴⁴

Wetland values and vocations

LAMRAC recently constructed the Centre d'Interpretation du Marais (CIM), a state of the art eco-friendly cultural center with an educational mission.⁴⁵ As part of promoting the new center, LAMRAC and the City of Magog jointly hosted a photography competition, under the theme of *Les mystères du Marais*, to coincide with the city's annual Semaine de la culture. Figure 7 was selected by the competition's jury to be displayed in the new center during its official opening ceremony. The centre's educational orientation and inaugural photo competition underscore Smardon's conviction that wetlands are favourable visual-cultural resources for photography and valued site's for learning about



**Figure 7. Les Mystères du Marais. 2010.
Digital Photograph. Caroline Beaudoin.**

nature. The centre's choice of a mystery theme for its photography competition reinforces Hammitt's theory regarding wetlands and how "people like to experience a mixture of open bog mat and wooded screens, which provide 'mystery' or intrigue about areas yet to be explored."⁴⁶ Given that Magog's CIM was constructed more than three decades after Hammitt's 1978 study was conducted, presumably a bond exists between mystery and wetlands that stems from the tradition of attributing sublime mystiques to the landscape.

By 2007 Magog's Marais was in need of a new facility to accommodate the increased volume of visitors to the site and the public's growing interest with ecological issues. In keeping with LAMRAC's environmental mandate the association chose the architect Marc Dufour to design a "green" center, which was completed in June 2007.⁴⁷ CIM's conscientious design demonstrates a broad concern for sustainable development and environmental integrity issues, with noticeable emphasis given to minimizing the building's effects on the environment. The structure's visual assimilation with its immediate environment is fully apparent (figure 8). Inspired by the wetland's richly diverse vegetation, Dufour's plans emulate the irregular form of a plant cell:

Comme la cellule, la construction permet les échanges avec l'extérieur tout en étant bien protégé des agressions. La partie nord est constituée de murs aveugles et d'une toiture réfléchissante. Elle abrite par ailleurs les fonctions plus privées du CIM : bureaux, salle mécanique, entreposage, etc. La partie sud, pour sa part, forme un lieu d'échange avec la communauté et avec la nature. Vitrée et lumineuse, avec une toiture végétale et un mur solaire, cette zone est imprégnée des bienfaits du soleil et d'une magnificence percée sur le milieu naturel.⁴⁸

CIM's windows are strategically positioned and protected by deciduous trees to maximize available sunlight throughout the winter, and to shield the interior from its intense heat during the summer. Its ecological design principles minimize the negative environmental impact of the building through enhanced efficiency and its moderate use of materials, energy, and space. The structure's vertical emphasis characteristically responds to these principles, as does its strategic



Figure 8. CIM. 2013. Digital Photograph. Caroline Beaudoin.

placement and deliberate directional orientation. Additionally, its overall design was conceived to readily adapt to new and innovative technologies, and shifting needs. CIM's mission is primarily educational. It hosts several educational activities throughout the year and also offers a variety of services including rental space, exhibits, and workshops. CIM's instructional mandate reinforces Smardon's conviction "that from an educational perspective, one of the most important qualities of wetlands is the diversity of different attributes which can be seen or experienced per unit area."⁴⁹

Conclusion

Seemingly, amidst today's global and boundless virtual world, there is nonetheless a keen interest in focusing on the particular, the singular, and the minutiae contained within our greater environments which contribute to our appreciation of the everyday through an admiration for the ordinary. This interest in deepening our understanding of the various environments we inhabit invariably informs our cultural identities. As anthropologist Tim Ingold advocates "the landscape is neither identical to nature, nor is it on the side of humanity against nature. As the familiar domain of our dwelling, it is *with us*, not *against us*, but it is no less real for that. And through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are part of it."⁵⁰ Wandering through Le Marais, the overwhelming tranquility amplifies the individual's sensory perceptions, making the landscape a lived, as opposed to imagined, experience that facilitates becoming one with it.

Le Marais has become an unintentionally created organic landscape in contrast to other carefully planned municipal spaces such as landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted's designs of New York City's Central Park, that first opened in 1857, and Montreal's Mount Royal Park which was inaugurated in 1876. This distinction calls attention to how we perceive some landscapes as specific destinations, and others as part of our everyday surroundings. The 19th and early 20th century taste for designed urban parks also calls attention to how landscapes were admired with pride when they were humanly composed, and easily overlooked with detachment, if not abused, in their natural state. Either way the landscape was assessed in terms of its perceived human value, whether recreationally as a site for leisure, or economically as a natural resource. Based on Le Marais' most recent and sustained efforts, it is clear that the 21st century recognizes the enormous need and collective potential to create methods and strategies devised to minimize, if not reverse, the harm done to physical spaces and the various species inhabiting such landscapes exploited as resources. In Magog's case, as it was throughout North America during modernity, industrial mills,

and mining and railway companies manipulated the natural landscape for corporate profit in the name of the "Nation's" best interest. This practice is gradually shifting towards Guattari's vision of a "collective interest [which] ought to be expanded to include companies that, in the short term, don't profit anyone, but in the long term are the conduits of a processual enrichment for the whole of humanity."⁵¹ The philosopher's "three ecologies" introduces the idea that culture, heritage, and humanity must gain equal or superior social significance over the economy within contemporary capitalist systems. He explains how "without modifications to the social and material environment, there can be no change in mentalities. Here, we are in the presence of a circle that leads me to postulate the necessity of founding an 'ecosophy' that would link environmental ecology to social ecology and to mental ecology."⁵² In one study geographer David Lowenthal found that "almost two out of three Americans identify themselves as environmentalists, valuing environment over economic growth."⁵³ Apparently there still exists a perplexing gap between how some individuals perceive themselves versus how they perceive the collective as social agents operating within a greater national environment. This denial phenomenon of perceiving gaps between personal and prevalent cultural values exacerbates the "ever-widening rift" identified by Lowenthal, "between the wilderness that created us and the civilization that we created."⁵⁴ Sites such as Le Marais and efforts undertaken by associations like LAMRAC, however, demonstrate that collective commitments do exist, and are certainly effective in narrowing such rifts. Guattari argues in favor of creativity as a means of liberating humanity from its debilitating and destructive social pattern, insisting that it is up to individuals to assume their importance and potential by breaking away from the collective in order to ultimately benefit the collective. He advocates individuality and creativity as the keys to true progress. LAMRAC's initiative demonstrates such individuality and creativity through its innovative and shared commitment to protecting, preserving, and promoting Magog's marshland that once served, not too long ago, as a literal wasteland.

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