

VERTICALE

Partnership

VCA + MAI — *Alliance*



# Trajectory, accommodation, and *genius loci*

Verticale—centre d'artistes (VCA) and MAI | Montréal, arts interculturels invite artists and collectives to submit proposals for in situ art projects that explore atypical sites by addressing the trajectories, transitional processes, and challenges of occupying space at various scales. The areas we enter and that enter us—as inhabited, stolen, occupied, forgotten, abandoned, unplanned, transformed, dreamt up, configured, and (re)activated—should also be considered, in all of their complexity.

To live and create, citizens and artists move from one space to another, creating new points of reference, new habitable environments, and new stories. What drives these meandering trajectories? Flood zones, migrations, transfers, moves, housing crises, lack of studio space; mobility can be a privilege or an imposition. Within these multiple contexts, what does it mean to build, relocate, or centralize ourselves? To settle or refuse to do so? *The season is over and every box has been filled. The only*

*thing left to do is to identify them. The piles of dust are being blown around by the breeze that comes through the poorly insulated studio walls. The room sounds different without the tools and materials that cluttered the shelves. The other people have already moved out. The only things left here are the stools and work tables above which a few ideas are still discernible. A careful look at a nearly empty space. You can feel the spirit of this place. A kind of diffused but specific feeling. Particular details come into focus. The genius loci has always lived here. Will it come with us or stay here, hidden in the floor's stains and holes? What kind of spirit will we encounter over there? Will we*

— *Whereas the miniature represents closure, interiority, the domestic and the overly cultural, the gigantic represents infinity, exteriority, the public, and the overly natural.*<sup>[1]</sup>

— *[T]he spirit of place describes reality. To discover exactly what it is and to find the best ways of speaking about it means that we need to become sensitive investigators of places.*<sup>[2]</sup>



*know how to perceive it and cultivate it as much as we hope?*

Present in various disciplinary fields and under different formulations, the concept of *genius loci* defines something that is felt within a place and whose presence imposes a certain kind of behaviour and respect. If the plethora of definitions is confusing, this ambiguity around the spirit of a place opens the door to on-site investigation: can the spirit of a place be used to guide our actions? Can it help us understand how to be in this site? How can we learn to visualize it and feed off of it to create meaningful spaces? How can we preserve it while accepting its reality as something living, nebulous, and shifting? How do we deal with our failure to observe and respond to it? How can we embody its dynamic power and for what purposes?

For VCA, these desire lines point to the design and construction of a physical gallery, and prompt us to orchestrate a major transition. The project looms large and the change in scale will be big. The need to reflect on the paradoxes of this type of intention through art and with artists is necessary. Is it too early to consider this? How can we establish ourselves while remaining mobile and flexible? Why change at all, and into what, and how?

Until this important move happens, VCA will continue to support art practices that take place outside the gallery space, and that resist homogenization and the overdetermination of urban spaces and art spaces. Mobility requires engagement; a keen awareness of an entry point (even if our presence and its trace are ephemeral); the momentum to create with the reality of the site and the material conditions of one's practice. In the transition from the studio to public space, accommodations must always be made. Responding to a site means experiencing it; from there, the desire to constantly reconfigure things sometimes emerges.

These trajectories and arrangements, and the modifications and easing that result from them, have an impact both on societal transformation and individual metamorphosis. How do we prepare for a move? What means do we devote to transitioning and establishing ourselves? What care do we put into making spaces more liveable? How much attention is needed to sense the *genius loci*? What configuration should we choose, and how do we think

— *Les récits de mémoire mobilisant l'espace servent de point de repère : ils permettent aux groupes sociaux de se représenter dans le temps et de construire par leurs récits la temporalité des espaces, de la fondation à la disparition.*<sup>[3]</sup>

— *To a child or an ardent adult, the leftover space can confer something of a sporadic, abrupt and unexpected opportunity to craft a moment of urban revelation.*<sup>[4]</sup>

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**about it, experience it, and secure it? In view of these tremendous changes, let's hope that the trajectory we choose will generate profound and gratifying change, and that the questions that currently consume and preoccupy us become the catalyst for our transformation!**

[1] Stewart, Susan. *On Longing, Narrative of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Durham : Duke University Press Books, 1993, p. 70.

[2] Brook, Isis. « Can Spirit of Place be a guide to ethical building? », dans Fox, Warwick. *Ethics and the Built Environment*, London : Routledge, 2000, p. 139-151.

[3] Gravereau, Sophie et Caroline Varlet. « Récits spatiaux : Se raconter socialement en racontant les espaces », *Sociologie des espaces*. Paris : Armand Colin, 2019, p. 190.

[4] Akerman, Abraham et Ariela F. Cornfield, « Greening As a Urbain Design Metaphor: Looking in the City's Soul in Leftover Spaces », *Structurist*, 2009/2010, p. 30-35.

**Presentation period: between September 2023 and August 2025**

This program supports the presentation of work by emerging, mid-career, and established artists. In the interest of inclusion, VCA strongly encourages submissions from people who are marginalized in the art world. We constantly strive to expand our outreach and the response to our calls by contacting a range of potential partners. Please do not hesitate to send your recommendations to us.

VCA presents works off-site. The center will accept proposals that take into account the physical and/or social space of dissemination, and that include a reflection on sites, public, and/or contexts. VCA will assist with the artists' surveying process and integration of their work so that the dissemination setting is appropriate and relevant to each individual project and art practice.

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**VCA offers the selected artist or collective:**

- support for the coordination and promotion of the project
- remuneration in exhibition rights
- participation in the remuneration of technical assistance
- contribution to transportation and travel expenses
- photographic documentation of the project
- an equipment loan

**The MAI offers the selected artist or collective:**

- personalized support and mentoring for project coordination
- a financial allowance for the development of the project (2000\$)
- opportunities for collective reflection
- access to the MAI rehearsal studios (80h)

**Proposals should include the following:**

- Contact information (full name, email address, phone number, mailing address, website)
- Project description (maximum 2 pages)
- Artist statement
- Up-to-date CV
- Visual documentation and descriptive list
- Any other relevant documentation, if needed (publications, press reviews, work schedule, budget, equipment needs, preliminary surveying documentation (sites, publics, contexts), etc.)

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Regular programming  
2023—25



**To submit a proposal:**

— **Mandatory completion of the form:** <https://form.jotform.com/230746517077258>

No file received other than by the form will be evaluated.

**Deadline to submit a proposal: May 12, 2023, at 11:59 PM**

All the details of the partnership and the Alliance program can be found on the MAI website:

<https://www.m-a-i.qc.ca/en/callforsubmission/alliance/>

To ensure the eligibility of an application:

<https://www.m-a-i.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Alliance-admissibility-EN-2.pdf>

**For any questions, write to this address: [engagement@m-a-i.qc.ca](mailto:engagement@m-a-i.qc.ca)**

VCA is proud of this partnership with MAI | Montréal, arts interculturels.

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