

UNTITLED (2003), Nicolas Baier and Cabinet Braun-Braën

This is the eighth and final stop of the Public Art, Nature and the City tour.

On the eastern face of the Engineering, Computer Science and Visual Arts Integrated Complex (commonly known as the EV Building), five stories of house plants cover the glass façade. Or to be more precise, the building is covered with images of plants printed on a laminate-like screen. This is Nicolas Baier's and Cabinet Braun-Braën's *Untitled*, a 22 x 25 metre mural installed on the top five floors of the building. At the time of its installation in 2003, the artwork was the largest and most expensive commission ever developed through Quebec's 1%-for-art program.

Printed on film adhered to glass and installed during the EV building's genesis, the work exemplifies the practice of artist Nicolas Baier. Baier is responsible for other notable public installations, including *Autoportrait* at Montreal's Place Ville Marie (2012). A digital bricolage, the EV building artwork was constructed using photographs of ten of Baier's houseplants. To produce the collage, Baier photographed his house plants, scanned the prints, and stitched the images together using Photoshop. The interior design firm Cabinet Braun-Braën was then responsible for creating the enormous digital print.

The artwork covers the windowpanes to create a tiled effect, with varying shades of blue, white, and green. Although it is a composition of different plants, the leaves are positioned to suggest a single, enormous plant whose blooms turn outward and grow over the building.

Visible from many corners of the city from various heights, the artwork's positioning, form and scale change at any given angle. Where are you positioned at this moment? Are you right below the artwork? Pause the tour, observe it or imagine its view from the other side, or even from a southeast corner of Ste. Catherine Street. The houseplants dot the skyline; they are visible from office towers further east in the downtown core and from the Ste. Catherine Street sidewalk. The work even peeks out from a sliver of space between skyscrapers when viewed from the top of Mount Royal. Have you experienced Baier's work from the mountain's summit?

Much like Holly King's *Seascape and the Sublime*, Nicolas Baier's *Untitled* is an artistic manipulation of the natural world and a photographic distortion of scale. A mainstay of domestic life, the house plant corrals nature to adorn indoor spaces. What happens when a gigantic houseplant enters urban life? In the case of this work, it occupies the outdoors and transforms a particular corner of the downtown campus that is devoid of greenspace.

Some people have interpreted the artwork as a visual reference to the green wreaths on the City of Montreal's coat of arms, which is decorated with the phrase "Concordia Salus" (Latin for "salvation through harmony"). Others notice the surface of the EV building as a kind of screen,

perhaps a reminder of the York Theatre that once stood on this site. Whether as allegory or screen image, how does this massive plant transform downtown Montreal?

This concludes the Public Art, Nature and the City tour. Continue the audio-guided tours with the Public Art, Public Memory or Public Art, Science and Technology tours.