

THE FOUR SEASONS (2010), Yehouda Chaki and Studio du Verre

This is the second stop on the Public Art, Nature and the City tour.

An all-season shelter from the elements, a food court, and a shortcut to the metro, this subterranean tunnel connects four major Concordia buildings. It is also a central part of the university's public-facing infrastructure. In this passageway between the John Molson building and the EV building, passersby can experience *The Four Seasons* encased in glass. At any time of year, passersby encounter four stained glass arrangements that correspond to the four seasons, with colours that drip and dance in the light.

This is Yehouda Chaki's and Studio du Verre's *The Four Seasons*, a stained-glass quadriptych commissioned to bring an impression of natural light into the tunnel. Installed in 2010, the piece was donated by the Guerrera family. The installation year coincided with the Board of Montreal Museum Directors' public declaration that Montreal is a "city of glass," one which emphasizes the specific world of Montreal glass art, whether it be integration into architectural elements, history, or the science behind its production. Although *The Four Seasons* remains in the public art collection many years after the museum directors' board made their declaration, we might ask: how does glass, a natural material, bridge the gap between the natural world and the urban sphere?

Working primarily as an expressionist painter, Chaki is a Montreal artist who is known for his abstract landscapes. This piece is the result of a precious, lengthy collaboration between Chaki and local stained-glass experts, Studio du Verre. To begin, Chaki created abstract sketches to capture spontaneous sensations, ideas, and feelings, interpreting the natural world. Chaki painted four panels which were replicated by studio technicians on glass panels. Their challenge was to translate the artist's brushstrokes into glass — resulting in what Chaki describes as a "collage of glass". Like King's photograph, *The Four Seasons* shares a link with the landscape painting tradition. However, Chaki takes the natural world's grandest movements — the changing of the seasons — and gives these an intimate frame. If you are able to, move up and down the tunnel to view it from both sides. What seasons do you notice, and how do they change?

If you can, take a moment to look at the glass works closely or imagine what it would look like. Unlike typical works that use lead ribs to hold pieces of stained glass together, no ribs separate the sections. Instead, these works are constructed by fusing stained glass between glass panels, creating open colour fields. This construction, alongside the work's installation, also allows the viewer to experience the work from either side. Take a moment to view or imagine the artwork from the tunnel ramp. Does this shift in perspective change how you interpret the work?

Perhaps you've noticed the spring melt, the winter thaw, the summer sun, or the autumn leaves. Did you feel summer's warmth, the winter's cold, the crispness of fall, or the spring's rebirth? Although one cannot actually experience the change of seasons in this tunnel, this work (like others you will visit on this tour) is meant to transport the viewer to another place. Although glass is an integral part of the urban environment, this artwork paradoxically manages to reflect the natural world back to us.

To continue this tour, click on *Untitled, Untitled, and Hanging Form No.3* by Gerald Gladstone.