

Audio Description Transcript: "Traffic Light"
m.i.a Collective

Art Direction: Arseli Dokumaci, Laurence Parent and Kim Sawchuk;
Graphic Design and Interaction, Antonia Hernández

This is a virtual poster, a two-dimensional image that lives at the domain address mia.mobilities.ca/posters/. It's home is cyberspace, however, as a digital object it can be repurposed for other media, including print formats. Because it lives in cyberspace, it has no size, but we can tell you this: it was coded in html, or hypertext markup language.

If you go to the domain where this poster lives, you will find 3 squares located side by side at the top of the poster, with some space left between the window's bar and the topside of the square. The squares are aligned to the right of the website, which is to your left. When you enter the domain, the squares appear in the middle of the screen with the title of each work written under them. Then you can scroll down to see the details and descriptions of each work, which will be read to you at the end of this audio description.

The background is a light beige and the squares are slightly separate. Three letters sit in the bottom left hand corner of each square and they are sized about one sixth of the square's length. The letters are pale beige, the same colour as the background; in lower case and in *FF DIN* font, which is a realist sans-serif typeface.

If we move from your left to your right, we begin with the red square, which has the letter *m*. In the second yellow square is the letter *i*. In the third green square is the letter *a*. Together the squares spell out the name of the collective who made the poster, *m.i.a*. What *m.i.a*. means is fluid and flexible. Use your imagination. The squares have several functions: the colors were chosen to reference traffic lights that blink and control the circulation and movement of bodies in urban space. The traffic lights are a reference to the overall content of the piece: the way that our built environments create inclusion and exclusion.

If you are a person with a physical disability, you will find Montreal a difficult city to navigate. Only six of the 27 metro stops are wheelchair accessible. None of the buses have audio cues for the names of streets to assist the visually impaired. The bus systems do have ramps, but these don't always work. As well, it is typical for only one place for one wheelchair user at a time. While many of the public buildings are supposed to be wheelchair accessible, and Quebec has a charter that supports discriminating against people with any disability, what you will find if you come to Montreal is that the vast majority of restaurants, clubs, and even art galleries that are inaccessible. A sill, a step, a series of stairs all block entry.

You will also encounter many paradoxical situations, where there is a sign that says you may enter, but no way to access a system. For instance, while the trains all have designated seating for the disabled, if you try and get on the train, and buy a ticket at the Parc station, you cannot cross the tracks to get that ticket to get on the train. These are just some examples of the infrastructural ableism. But let us return to the description of the piece.

If you scroll over any one of the three squares, you will notice that something happens. The red square suddenly changes. A set of 4 or 5 images flash before you. The square has been animated as what is known in design language as a GIF. This Giff begins with the letter *m*, shows a series of images of urban space, and ends with a slogan. The first slogan, white lettering on red, reads: (quote) Stop Ableism (end of quote). The second slogan, white lettering on yellow, reads (quote) Megafone (end of quote). The third slogan, white lettering on red, reads (quote) Crip City (end of quote). If you click each GIFF, you will be taken through cyberspace to another space on the Mobile Media Lab website, the site for all of our *m.i.a.* projects.

If you scroll under the squares you will see some text underneath each. The texts describe in brief the title of each piece and list the participants in this project. The first text underneath *Architectural Ableism* reads as follows:

(quote) *Architectural Ableism* a collaboration with RAPLIQ

Ableism is a system of oppression that discriminates against disabled people.

Architectural Ableism is a series of video capsules, scripted by A-A participants, exploring the paradoxes and perils of navigating the city of Montreal.

Director: Laurence Parent; Cinematography and Editing: Joëlle Rouleau; A-A participants: Henry Desbiolles; Linda Gauthier; Marie-Eve Veilleux; Sound design; Ben Spencer; Producers: Kim Sawchuk and Arseli Dokumaci (end of quote)

The second text underneath *Megafone* reads as follows:

(quote) Montreal*in/accessible a collaboration with Antoni Abad

Montreal*in/accessible is a geo-locational art-work, developed by Antoni Abad, that chronicles the obstacles to urban inclusivity encountered by disabled people. Since June 2012 over 2,000 barriers have been recorded using the Megafone software application.

Artist: Antoni Abad; Programmer; Matteo Sisti Sette; Montreal Project Directors: Kim Sawchuk and Laurence Parent; Montreal*in/accessible participants: Melanie Benard; Henry Desbiolles; Arseli Dokumaci; Julien Gascon-Samson; Linda Gauthier; Laurence Parent; Kim Sawchuk; Anna Tkaczewska; Marie-Eve Veilleux (end of quote)

The third text underneath *Crippling the Landscape 1: Quebec City* reads as follows:

(quote) *Crippling the Landscape 1: Quebec City* by Laurence Parent

Crippling the Landscape expresses the desire to impair ableism and to damage the structures of power that reinforce the 'normalcy' of ableist architecture. Crippling the Landscape 1: Quebec City is a thirteen minute video chronicling the five kilometer journey from Laval University to the Ste-Foy train station from the point of the wheelchair.

Director, Editing, Cinematography: Laurence Parent; Editorial Assistance: Kim Sawchuk (end of quote)

Thank you for listening to this description of our project.

Montreal*in/accessible

The yellow square brings you to another m.i.a collaboration with Barcelona artist Antoni Abad. If you click on the blinking yellow square you will be brought to a site called Montreal*in/accessible, which is part of a project called canal accessible, created by Abad over 10 years ago.

As part of Montreal*in/accessible, people with physical impairments who use mobility aids (such as a wheelchair or scooter) take photographs with cellphones to document the barriers that they encounter in the city of Montréal. These photos are geo-located on a map that is populated with their user-generated content. The project visualizes the patterns of systemic discrimination against people with disabilities and physical impairments that have become rooted in Montréal's urban landscape.

Montreal*in/accessible is presented as a website. On the top of the website, there is a menu bar. The first item on this bar, Montreal*in/accessible, lists the users of the project. Next to this item lie, subsequently, editorial, forum, etiquettes, carte, media and a propos. Each of these items, when clicked, displays its contents only. On the top left corner of the menu bar, which is to your right, there is a place to sign in for the project; a place to connect and a place to change the language from French to English and vice versa.

Under the menu bar, you see a list of tags, such as constructions, barre, and bravo, which have recently been used to describe obstacles and accessibility. Underneath these tags are the images and their geolocations. Each image is placed side by side with its geolocation and the name of the user who took the photo, the date when it was taken and the tags used to describe it are specified underneath the images.

Architectural Ableism

This particular series that you now have access to is known as the *Architectural Ableism* series. It is a set of five-minute video capsules created by members of RAPLIQ, who document in five minutes an encounter they are having with ableist architecture in different public locations in Montreal. In other words, this square acts as a portal to this video content.

Henry in the Gay Village

This is a five-minute video capsule scripted and narrated by Henry Desboilles. The capsule follows Henry as he tries to enjoy the terraces in the Gay Village in Montreal. St-Catherine Street, which goes all the way through the village, is pedestrianized during summer months and is quite popular for both locals and tourists who would like to enjoy the open-air restaurants, cafes, and street entertainments. In the capsule, we witness Henry's experience of the

street as a disabled person. Henry begins with drawing attention to the first barrier to entering the village, the metro station, which is not accessible. Then he goes on to show how most of the terraces do not accommodate people in wheelchairs. In some cases, they have a step, which Henry cannot surmount in his chair. In others, they have ramps that are either too steep or that do not have the appropriate width, slope, and texture that warrant the user's safety.

Marie-Eve at Udm

This is a four-minute video capsule scripted and narrated by Marie-Eve Veillus. Marie-Eve explains the paradox of trying to enter a classroom at University of Montreal, where she is studying. She is at Pavilion Marguerite-d'Youville and it is the start of the term in fall. The weather is not yet cold and Marie-Eve is outside the building, narrating her experience of entering the classroom while the images show her trying to get into the building. She details the problems she encounters along the way: an automatic button located at a point where there is a step; a ramp that she encounters but the doorway that it leads to has no button for automatic entry. As there are no automatic doors, Marie-Eve has no choice but to pull the doors herself from her wheelchair.

Marie-Eve on Saint-Laurent Boulevard

This is a four-minute video capsule scripted and narrated by Marie-Eve Veillus. Here, Marie-Eve takes you to the festival Mix-Art on Montreal's St Laurent Boulevard where there is a sidewalk sale. It is summer time. You see images of a gate blocking the entrance to the street and a raised terrace obstructing the sidewalk. Both prevent Marie-Eve from enjoying the sidewalk sale and participating in public culture. You see her going in the street, encountering a speed hump, inaccessible terraces and terraces that prevent her entry to her favorite movie theatre.

Linda at the Human Rights Commission

This is a three-minute video capsule scripted and narrated by Linda Gauthier. Here, Linda takes you to the Human Rights Commission building. It is fall time and Linda going around outside the building with her service dog and her voiceover narrates her experience. A few minutes later, images show her inside the building as she tries to reach a buzzer that is too high and to pull an automated heavy door that is not working. In between, you see signs for disabled

people showing where the lifts or automated doors are. As these images appear, Linda tells that they were finally denied access to the commissioner's office.

Linda at Montréal City Hall

This is a four-minute video capsule scripted and narrated by Linda Gauthier. In this final video, Linda takes you to City Hall where she often finds herself, as the President of RAPLIQ. One of the key aspects of the organization is that they actively lobby the city, the transit and municipal council to ensure, for example, that voting stations in Quebec is accessible. In a recent study, RAPLIQ has found that many stations designated as accessible, are in fact not, denying people with disability their fundamental democratic rights. In this capsule, Linda takes you through the corridors of City Hall showing problems of access at every moment: counters that are too high, with no provision made for a space that is lower, bathrooms inadequately laid out, access doors that are problematic. And finally no spaces in city hall that are for anyone who is disabled.

Crippling the Landscape Series 1 Québec City

This last square, *Crip City*, features a thirteen minute video filmed and edited by myself, Laurence Parent. The video chronicles the five kilometer journey, which originally took thirty-five minutes from the Université Laval to the train station in Québec City. Using a "herocam" attached to my wheel chair, I take you on a trip from a to b from the point of view of my wheel chair, exposing the "rugosities" (to quote Brazilian geographer Milton Santos) of this route, indicating moments of danger as I wend my way home. Titled *Crippling the Landscape 1: Québec City*, the video brings you through this movement-space.

The video starts as I leave Université Laval. I don't really know where to go. In Québec city, only 4 bus routes out of 111 are wheelchair accessible. One of these bus lines had a stop at the university. I am lucky. I get on the bus, quite easily. I get off few kilometers away. Still 3 kilometers to go before I get to the train station. There is a lot of traffic. The sidewalks are bumpy. Suddenly, the rain starts. I stop to open my umbrella. I continue my way under the heavy rain. The image of my Hero camera is partially blur by the train and my transparent umbrella. I

encounter inaccessible sidewalks. I am compromising my security but I have no other choice. There is no accessible bus and I cannot hail an accessible taxi either. At some intersections, I am unable to reach the pedestrian crossing button. I finally get to the train station. The journey took 35 minutes mainly because the speed of my wheelchair somewhat compensated for the lack of accessible transportation.

The goal of my video is to cripp the landscape of Québec City. By crippin' the landscape I intend to impair the functioning of ableism, to damage and make defective the structures of power which contribute to reinforce the normalcy of ableist architecture.