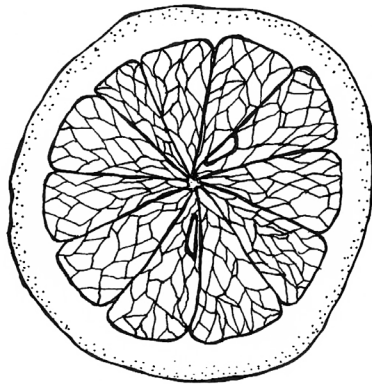


# Montreal's Great Orange

Cultural Landscapes Seminar | Prof Robert Mellin | Winter 2018 | Hannah Ker

A study of Montreal's Orange Julep Restaurant



FOR A REALLY LONG TIME,  
I DIDN'T KNOW THIS  
WAS A RESTAURANT  
I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST AN  
ORANGE BALL  
FOR FUN.

- JUSTINE S.  
(YELP)



## Introduction

*Landscape allows and even encourages us to dream.*  
(Tuan, 1979, p. 101)

This quote from the renowned geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan, provides a useful starting point from which to examine the significance of the Orange Julep. While the Orange Julep is a unique building in the midst of a bland urban highway landscape, its existence is so much more than what meets the eye. The fantasy and imagination surrounding the Julep is what gives this Montreal landmark its true significance. This bulbous orange structure exists most strongly not in its physical presence, but rather in the minds of those that visit it. The Orange Julep is thus an excellent example of the connection that Yi-Fu Tuan highlights between reality and imagination in landscape (Tuan, 1979).

The Orange Julep embodies an idealized vision of the past and evokes nostalgia for a time that no longer exists. In the context of the Julep, the past is imagined both collectively and individually. In Montreal residents' collective imagination, the Julep is evocative of optimism and simplicity. The Julep reminds residents of the suburban landscapes that characterized mid twentieth century urbanism in North America and the excitement that they inspired.

The Julep also inspires personal recollections of the past as those who visit are reminded of their childhoods and youth. Memories of carefree summer days characterize many individuals' past experiences with this landscape. These idealized pasts, however, were never truly experienced. The past is instead a flexible and vague memory that allows individuals to fill in their own

imaginations (Lowenthal, 1975). The imagined versions of the past that are inspired by the Orange Julep highlight the things that are missing from our present.

Following Lewis' (1979) "Axioms for Reading the Landscape", it is important to consider how history shapes the landscapes that are present today. The history of the Orange Julep should be considered in the context of postwar suburban expansion and automobile-centric urban development. Today, the Julep sits in an unpleasant location along that busy Decarie Expressway on the periphery of Montreal. It is difficult to access without a car and is surrounded by little but car dealerships, further fast food restaurants, and a lone strip club. At the Julep's time of development in the 1960's, however, its location along a significant highway reminded patrons of the exciting new freedoms and opportunities enabled by automobile travel and suburban growth.

Throughout the following exploration of the Orange Julep, my aim is to understand the rich cultural background of this Montreal landmark and understand how it exists both in reality and in the minds of Montreal residents. I hope to highlight the contrasts between the imaginary Orange Julep and the physical Orange Julep.

My representation of the Julep in this modest booklet is the result of my time spent photographing its interior, exterior, and surrounding context. I visited the Julep as a customer on four

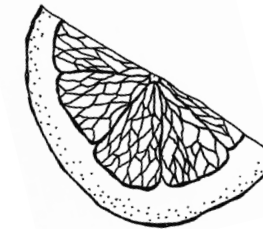
occasions, where I interviewed patrons and observed the activities of others visiting the Julep. To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the Orange Julep's cultural significance, I also conducted online research to learn about its history.

I believe that it is important to note my own positionality in this research endeavour. As a recent Montreal resident, I have had no experiences within the Orange Julep prior to this project. My experience of the Julep and resulting documentation is thus likely to be distinct from that of an individual who has grown up in Montreal and has many memories of this landmark.

Moreover, as this project was undertaken during the winter, it was not possible to document the warm weather activities that characterize many individual's experiences and memories of the Julep.

The Orange Julep is a unique feature of Montreal's urban landscape that encourages its patrons and visitors to dream.

- Hannah Ker





YOU'RE ON THE HIGHWAY.

YOU SEE A GIANT ORANGE SPHERE IN THE  
DISTANCE .

WHAT IS THAT?  
IS THIS A NATIONAL MONUMENT  
OF SOME SORT?

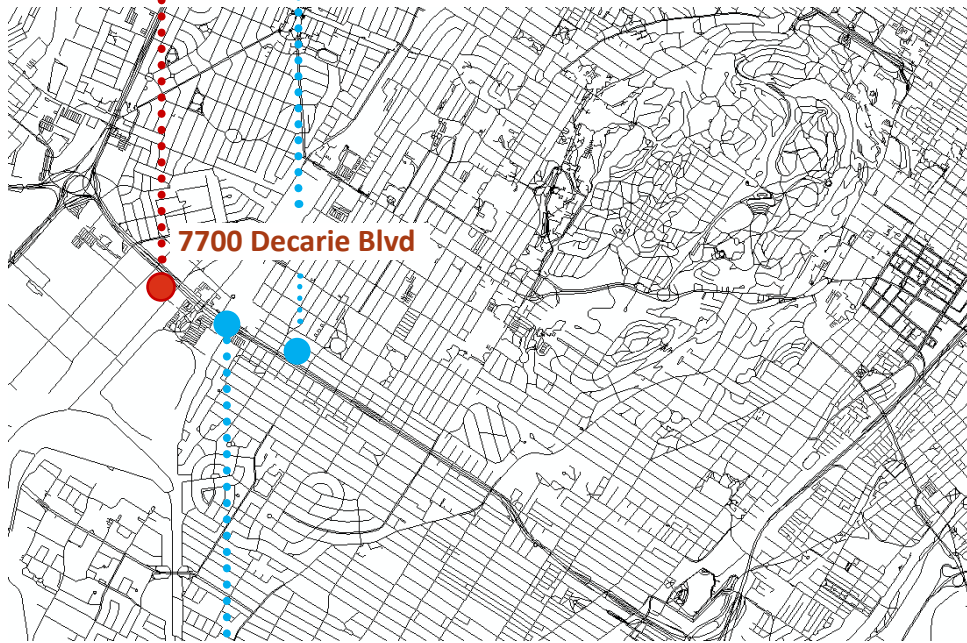
NO YOU SILLY.

IT'S THE GIGANTIC ORANGE THAT  
EVERYBODY TALKS ABOUT.

- KIMMY N.  
(YELP)

A spectacular feature on an otherwise bland landscape, Montreal's famous Orange Julep is much more than a fast-food restaurant. While the surrounding grey suburban nothingness reminds us of the pitfalls of uncontrolled urban sprawl, the Julep serves as a pleasant token of nostalgia for the city in the 50's. This Montreal institution is a glimpse into the city's past. While this great orange bulb sits hidden away on the periphery of the city, it reminds one of a time when waitresses rode rollerblades, fast food was exciting, and Montrealers were optimistic about the potential of automobiles and the great Decarie Expressway. Today, the surrounding parking lot is still a summertime weekly meeting place for classic car and bike enthusiasts. As such, the Orange Julep continues to be a source of pride for many Montreal residents.





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This is not a neighbourhood for pedestrians. Cars zoom by on the expressway below. It's loud. Nearby fast-food restaurants boast of their drive-in windows.

Grey slush blends in with the bleak concrete. It's easy to spot my final destination.

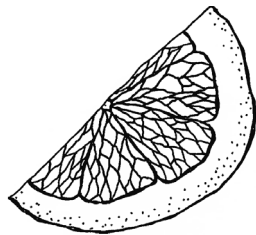
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The symbolic simplicity of a giant, spherical orange building housing a restaurant famous for its orange-flavoured beverages is a refreshing respite from an increasingly complicated reality. The building itself acts as a sign, advertising what is offered inside and drawing in patrons from the surrounding concrete jungle.

This building's whimsy brings customers from far and wide, inviting them to experience child-like excitement at the thought of dining inside a fruit. The legend that the Julep's founder, Hermas Gibeau, intended to live in the upper floors with his family evokes thoughts of a Willy Wonka-like figure and contributes to a sense of wonder surrounding the Julep.





MADE WITH  
SUNKIST  
ORANGES  
DAILY

SUMMER AND HAPPINESS

CREAM SODA

SUGARY ORANGE

MELTED ORANGE  
CREAMSICLE

OJ MILKSHAKE



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It tastes like a fluffy creamsicle. So light and airy. It makes me wish I was thirsty so I could enjoy drinking it even more. It can't be true that they put raw egg in this... can it?

I thought it would be more orange in colour. I wouldn't even call it juice. A milkshake variant perhaps? I wish I bought a large.

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The winter takes the life out of this Montreal monument. I can imagine these picnic benches as the perfect spot for summer gatherings and meetings of friends. Tattered festival flags hanging over the parking lot evoke a sense of sadness and longing for the summer that is no longer present.

The orange julep must taste so much better under the hot sun.

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I DREAM OF THAT COLOUR  
ORANGE

-SARA M.







## References

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Lowenthal, D. (1975). Past time, present place: landscape and memory. *Geographical Review*, 1-36.

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