MAISONNEUVE AND ITS ARCHITECTURAL HOTSPOTS
by Sarah Freyss et Lyna Bourget-Vecchio

One day, we decided to go for a walk on the other side of the railway tracks. That was four years ago. We never came back. We're taking you on a tour of Maisonneuve (the other part of Hochelaga!), between Bourbonnière and Viau, a somewhat unpopular, often little known, but very seductive area! We literally fell in love with this neighbourhood, with its myriad personalities.

In fact, we found everything we were looking for: a relaxed atmosphere, a huge variety of shops (from the Pataterie's double cheese bacon to Essentiellement Sol's herbal medicines, not to mention the Blind Pig's disco ball), a cool crowd and a truly fascinating history! Surprisingly, this former industrial city—the Pittsburgh of Canada—has so much to offer when it comes to architectural heritage.

Here's a list of our favourite spots (the same ones we share with our friends when we try to convince them to adopt Maisonneuve as their neighbourhood).

MARCHÉ MAISONNEUVE
One of the more popular places in our hood (we couldn’t NOT mention it!). Built in 1914, for a long time it was one of the largest covered markets in East End Montreal. A complete restoration in the mid-90s returned it to its original splendour. Inspired by the Beaux-Arts style and City Beautiful—the American urban planning movement—it’s the only building in the neighbourhood with all four facades in grey stone—talk about Maisonneuve radiating its splendour in all directions! And there’s no way anyone can miss the famous “Fermière” fountain, by the celebrated sculptor Alfred Laliberté. A female farmer…in the public square…pretty audacious for the time! We just adore it!

This is where we spend the most time. We love doing our grocery shopping here (it houses the only fish market in the neighbourhood, and it’s the ideal spot to binge on berries). In the summertime, we take a dip in the pool just behind the market, then stop in for brunch at Raclette de Bagatelle, just a few steps away—simply sumptuous.

We challenge you to find a marketplace that rivals this one, anywhere in the city!

FIRE STATION No. 1 OR CASERNE LETOURNEUX
When we bike out of the neighbourhood, we stop along the bike path to admire it. We imagine firefighters on the job in the 1950s, along a bustling Notre-Dame Street, crowded with shops and people, right on the banks of the St. Lawrence… You may have heard something about this site (particularly if you’re a soccer fan), as it recently became the Montreal Impact’s training facility. Distinct from the other public buildings, with its unique style, this 1915 firehouse was inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright (no less than the architect of the Guggenheim Museum in New York City!).

Why such a tall tower on a fire station, you ask? We can tell you! It was used to dry the fire hoses, which, at the time, were made of leather.

DENISE-PELLETIER THEATRE
Now for a little foray into the romantic… Last fall, this is where I had my second date with my Romeo! We love the charm of this theatre with its elaborate Italian ornamentation (wait ’til you see the inside!). This old Movie Palace, built in 1929, formerly called the Granada Theatre, was decorated by Emmanuel Briffa (FYI, a major Canadian painter and decorator).
We are so lucky to have this magnificent theatre in Maisonneuve, which features amazing shows. Sometimes, love is even featured!

**STATION No. 1**
A list of architectural hotspots in Maisonneuve would be incomplete without at least one example of industrial heritage. Most of the factories in the area have been converted, sometimes very successfully. A case in point is Station No. 1. The result is aesthetic and incredibly well integrated into the neighbourhood (the building has been turned into a housing coop!). Built in 1903, it was Montreal’s first electrical relay station (yes, Maisonneuve was the entry point for the city’s electricity). It was linked to the Shawinigan dam, making it the longest electrical line in Canada! Recognized for its architecture, it won a heritage enhancement award in 2011. Take a stroll into the interior courtyard to see the old (and super huge) overhead crane.

There’s still more along this guided tour…

**TRÈS-SAINT-NOM-DE-JÉSUS CHURCH**
Adam Street features no fewer than five churches (the HQ for masses, if you will!), but Très-Saint-Nom-de-Jésus was the first to be built in Maisonneuve, in 1906. One day, we had a chance to visit it. Standing at the base of the steps, we were dwarfed by this imposing building. But NOTHING prepared us for what we would see once inside.

The interior decoration is SPLENDID: gold, silver, Limoges stained glass, they sure didn’t skimp on extravagance! The organ in Notre Dame Basilica pales in comparison to its Casavant organ, the biggest one in Canada! Sadly, though, it is almost inaccessible…

OK, we admit it, it’s number one on our list faves!

Maisonneuve has become our little nest. Even our friends have a hard time getting us out of there. It has everything: cafés, bars, restaurants and wonderful local shops. It also offers all kinds of culture and entertainment: from the Zone Homa artists festival to the drive-in theatre without my car, to say nothing of all the food fairs. So many opportunities to rub shoulders with those who make this neighbourhood so special…

Maisonneuve, we will never leave you, cross our hearts!