



Sherbrooke qc

Street Museum





trompe-l'oeil.info EBOOK

Having a book published in our day and age is truly a battle. An eBook publication is an excellent option—a fast, free and environmentally friendly way to publish and thereby promote a concept.

While sending photographs by email may be simple and easy, telling the story of a group of artists, a city or a concept requires more time in terms of design, writing and execution. An eBook also requires a little more time from Internet users. However, the principle of www.trompe-l'oeil.info is to provide you with in-depth information, and this is what sets it apart from other resources available on the Web.

With this second eBook, we have sought to tell the story of a city in Quebec that showcases trompe-l'oeil in order to bring its past to life, namely the city of **SHERBROOKE**, and to introduce you to the group of artists who produce these exquisite frescoes, namely **M.U.R.I.R.S.**

Our French Canadian cousins have developed a tour of superb oversized murals in their city. This artwork is such a treat for the eyes and exudes such strong artistic appeal that we wanted to pay tribute to them, and we hope that one day in the not-too-distant future, during a trip to Quebec, you might make a detour to visit this city.

Lionel GRIPON
President of the Pinceau d'Or Committee
Designer of www..trompe-l'oeil.info

SHERBROOKE QC

CANADA

The city of Sherbrooke is located in Quebec, 140 kilometres east of Montreal. Of its 150,000 inhabitants, 91% speak French and 5% speak English. It is the sixth largest city in Quebec.



The Sherbrooke region is well known for its undulating landscape permeated by lakes and streams, as well as its architectural backdrop reminiscent of New England. It is situated right at the confluence of the Magog and Saint-François Rivers. Tourists especially appreciate one of its campgrounds, which is located on an island in the middle of the Saint-François.

HISTORY

The first person of European descent to settle on the future site of Sherbrooke was a French Canadian named Jean-Baptiste Nolain, of whom little is known other than that he became established in 1795 and set out to live an agricultural lifestyle.

Sherbrooke would later flourish owing to its metallurgy and textile industries. Around the 1880s, the metallurgy sector employed one third of the city's industrial workers. Two of these workers, Jenckes and Smith Elkins, merged their businesses to create the Jenckes Machine Company. They mainly produced locomotive parts and machinery for paper mills and mines. The textile sector also thrived starting in 1880. The Paton factory was a key reference when it came to wool fabrics.

Today, Sherbrooke is a sizable college town that welcomes nearly 40,000 students each year. The city's ratio of students to residents is the highest in all of Quebec.



VITALITY

Sherbrooke is a young and dynamic city that has used mural art to bring its past back to life. Thanks to this strategy, the city's quality of life is better than ever.



MURIRS

THE CITY'S HISTORY IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Behind the name **M.U.R.I.R.S.** (Urban Murals for the Revitalization of Buildings and Social Reconciliation) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to enhance and promote local settings by producing mural artwork and fostering social solidarity.

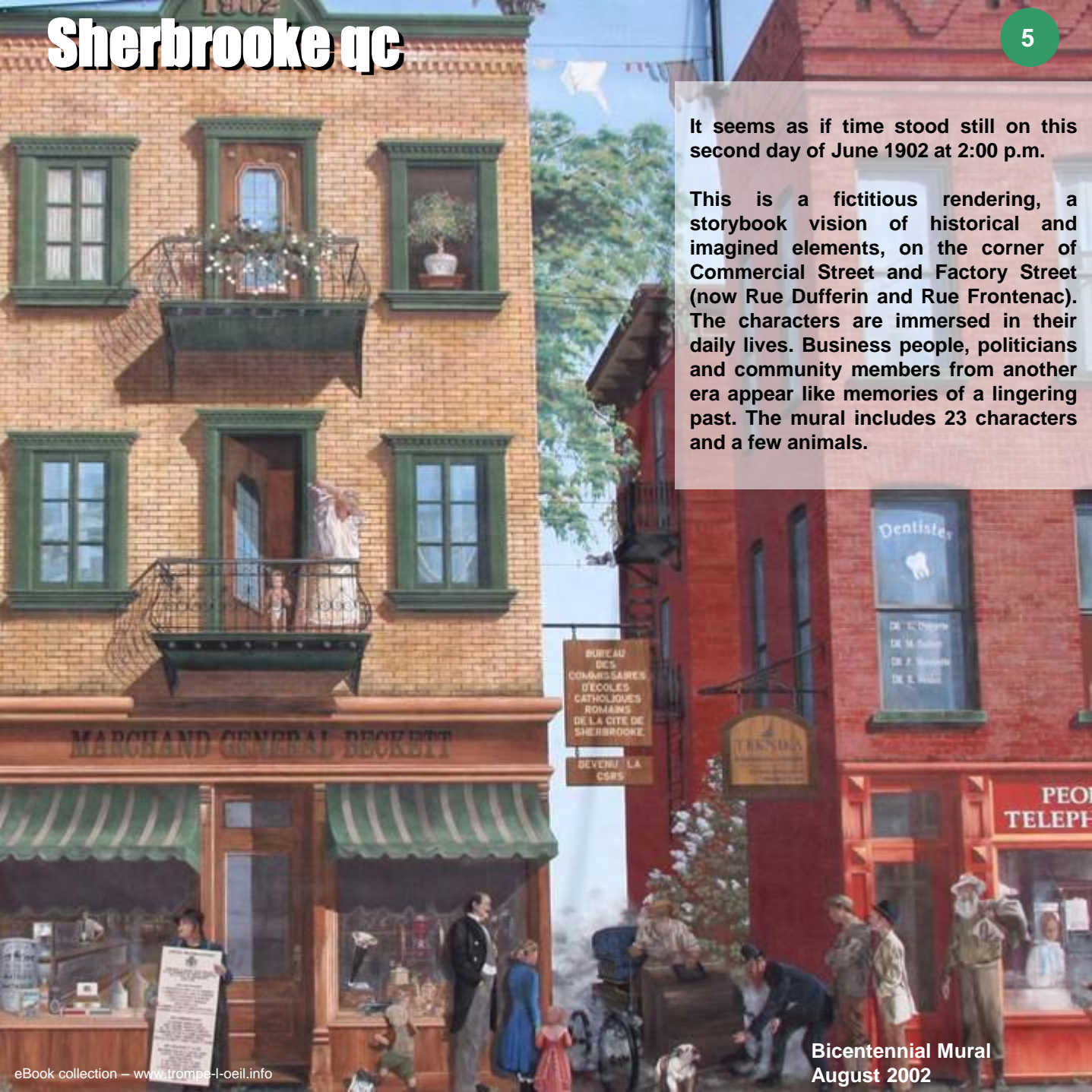


THE TEAM

The organization's permanent team is made up of four members: Serge Malenfant and Geneviève Reesör, from the original team that undertook and created the first fresco mural, as well as Raphaëlle Coulombe-Allie and Saïda Tremblay. The team is managed by a Board of Directors composed of nine individuals with backgrounds in architecture, urban planning, law, accounting and human resources.

It seems as if time stood still on this second day of June 1902 at 2:00 p.m.

This is a fictitious rendering, a storybook vision of historical and imagined elements, on the corner of Commercial Street and Factory Street (now Rue Dufferin and Rue Frontenac). The characters are immersed in their daily lives. Business people, politicians and community members from another era appear like memories of a lingering past. The mural includes 23 characters and a few animals.



Bicentennial Mural
August 2002

PUTTING SOCIETY FIRST

The aims of [M.U.R.I.R.S.](#) are solely social, touristic and artistic, with no intent of monetary gain. All profit or other gain is employed in the accomplishment of specific goals:

- **Improving** the city's urban décor and offering artistic revitalization by means of mural artwork.
- **Promoting** culture by producing collective works of art, thus working toward solidarity between various social groups.
- **Enhancing** tourist appeal and promoting the city's heritage and culture.

- This collective project adds to the sociocultural and tourist facets of the Sherbrooke community. It has been designed and carried out by and for citizens, for future generations and for the reclaiming of historical roots. The artistic role of these murals is to awaken in passers-by a sense of reclaiming urban space, of reconciliation with their past. The murals are a gateway to the region's culture.

COMMITMENT

[M.U.R.I.R.S.](#) is more than a set of 12 murals; it represents a commitment to the community that is realized through social engagements with a number of community organizations in Sherbrooke. M.U.R.I.R.S. implements projects in collaboration with La Chaudronnée de l'Estrie (service for the disadvantaged), La Nuit des sans-abris (poverty awareness event), La Coalition sherbrookoise pour le travail de rue (coalition for street work), Le Comptoir familial (community-based discount store), Les Petits frères des pauvres (elderly assistance program), Le Centre Jeunesse de l'Estrie (youth centre), Le Centre de réadaptation de l'Estrie (rehabilitation centre), and local educational partners, among others.

SATISFACTION

Serge Malenfant confided to us that he will always be thankful to his city for having given him the opportunity to create all these murals. Whether the adventure continues or not, the work already achieved is a source of tremendous personal satisfaction. This project has become what it is today thanks to many people (too numerous to list



here) who have joined forces to create the "trompe-l'œil tour," which is now called **Sherbrooke, Land of Fresco Murals**. And, of course, we should not forget to acknowledge the people of Sherbrooke, who literally adopted the murals.

Serge Malenfant : « *Thank you for having given me the opportunity and privilege of making my most ambitious dreams come true in my home town* ».

LOGO :

The [M.U.R.I.R.S.](#) logo has changed several times to serve the cause. It is simply made up of the letter "M" for [M.U.R.I.R.S.](#) and "Mur" (wall). It also represents an opening, an archway to the future in the form of a trompe-l'œil style arch.



THE STORY OF A MURAL

THE GOOD YEARS

When I visited Sherbrooke in 2008 to see its fresco murals (travelling from Montreal to Quebec, so that visiting Sherbrooke was a slight detour), I was amazed by the quality of the artwork. The dimensions, details, figures, trompe-l'oeil effects—everything was just a pleasure to take in.

“The Good Years” is one the murals I found most appealing. The wooden balconies and staircases, as well as the colours, are a picture-perfect reflection of local houses

DESIGN

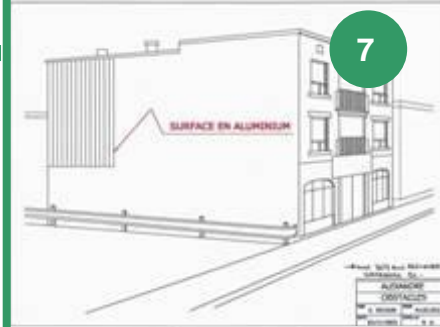
Lionel GRIPON : Which technique do you use to make your murals?

Serge Malenfant (MURIRS) : We have done research, compared different ways of doing things and tried out a number of drafts to develop the right technique for our climate. The fresco's painted surface is an essential factor. Since we do not know the quality of the existing wall's thermal insulation, especially for older buildings, we build an independent surface to paint on installed on the original wall, so we don't paint on the original stratum.

In order to have a robust and rigid surface, we generally create the murals on panels that are mounted and screwed onto an aluminum structure. The painted surface is therefore independent from the original masonry. This allows air to circulate between the wall and the mural, enabling their independent differential movement and contributing to their longevity.

The next step is the coating: we apply an adhesive substance, a mixture of acrylic resin and cement, in two layers. It has to be spread evenly over the panels and levelled so as to provide the smoothest possible surface and a perfectly uniform appearance. Only then can the painting begin.

“Marouflage” or backing which consists of glueing is not recommended in our climate, since a fine layer of humidity can form between surfaces.



« LE PETIT CANADA »

This neighbourhood of French-Canadian workers was named “Le Petit-Canada.”

With this mural, [M.U.R.I.R.S.](#) and its extreme painter artists wished to pay tribute to Sherbrooke's southwest neighbourhood. This area, here seen in the daily paper of September 27, 1957, was known for its contributions to the textile, mechanical and metallurgy industries. The neighbourhood consisted mostly of large post-war (baby-boom) families.

Industrialization also brought about the opening of alleys as well as the construction of backyards and square houses with large galleries, all of which resulted in convivial neighbourhoods



Sherbrooke was becoming increasingly active with its burgeoning university and the arrival of new technologies such as primitive television sets, which allowed people to observe the outside world from the comfort of their own homes. In this scene, a backdrop of Elvis Presley music, Chevrolet Bel-Air cars, and the “Sainte Flanelle” jersey of Quebec’s national hockey team sets the stage for the appearance of a few local personalities and familiar merchants.

“The Good Years”: a mural unveiled in August 2005



Sherbrooke qc

Tradition and Prevention
June 2007

9



PAINTING IN QUEBEC :

LG: How does M.U.R.I.R.S. operate?

SM: Since 2002, [M.U.R.I.R.S.](#) has created 12 murals, for a total surface area equivalent to more than two football fields, illustrating some 341 regional personalities and an even larger number of cultural figures from our heritage. Over the years, roughly 30 inspired and multi-talented artists and craftspeople as well as numerous local businesses have participated in creating the murals. The number of artists on the team varies depending on the complexity of each project. It is important to understand that in Quebec the timeframe for creating a fresco mural is short. When visitors from overseas ask us what Quebecers do in the summertime, we like to answer that "we go swimming on that day!"

The murals therefore represent seasonal work for the muralists, who must work in highly variable weather conditions.



LOCAL IMPACT :

LG : In 2008, I came to Sherbrooke just to see your murals. Have they created a force of attraction for your city?

SM : The answer is yes, as your interest demonstrates. Sherbrooke's murals boost the city's tourist appeal and complement a variety of live activities. The dramatized event « *Par le chemin des fresques* » with its 2,000 summer spectators, "*L'amoureux des voitures antiques*" with its guided tours of the murals in an antique car of the customer's choice, *the circuit pedestre* or walking tour in the company of "Francis, the window cleaner" (70% of whose spectators come from outside Sherbrooke), and the Mémoire Vive interactive tour guided by GPS on iPad are all mural-related attractions that provide a wider array of features for tourists.

Above all, we have thought it important that the city's population be familiar with and recognize the murals, and that the community become their ambassadors for the tourists who come to our city, most of whom are with their families. We also have to have a sufficient number of murals over a given area to give them enough visibility.

We hope to make the murals a key tourist attraction, and we think this is a worthy goal. This objective is increasingly becoming a reality, but it is a long-term goal. We don't want the murals to be decorative accessories; we want them to be dynamic hubs of activity. We are now in "Phase II" of the organization and the city's support, which entails the completion of other murals of varied styles, as well as the creation of hosted activities.

Our inspiration comes from the wall itself. Some say that walls have ears, but we think that walls have voices—they tell us their stories. "Location, location, location," say our neighbours to the south! Indeed, everything in the mural is connected to its location: its personal, historical and architectural character, its neighbourhood and the people who created and lived in them. It would be impossible to move a mural to another part of the city once it is finished. The wall itself, as well as its frame and location, determines the pictorial composition and the colour palette. The final step is to try to make the viewer forget the red brick wall itself using various trompe-l'oeil techniques.



Brochure on the frescoes in Sherbrooke (Tourist Office)

BEHIND THE FREScoes

If you're like me and have a passion for murals, you probably end up discovering cities or neighbourhoods that you never would have otherwise visited, and relish discovering a huge façade in an area or at an intersection. The enjoyment comes from looking at the artwork, of course, but also thinking about all the work that the artists put into it, and especially imagining the little stories that played out during the murals' creation.



LG : Do you have a story in particular that you would like to share regarding the creation of one of your murals ?

SG : They all have a story! With each mural, we “hit a wall” that is both challenging and rewarding. I think the satisfaction lies in the challenge, and to quote Leonardo da Vinci, *Ostinato rigore* (with obstinate rigour), almost anything can be accomplished. But the real *raison d'être* of the murals resides in exchanges with the public. I especially enjoy moments when passers-by tell us their stories through the murals. Here is an excerpt from a letter that illustrates the power of mural art:

“My mother has just lost the man of her life, and had to move to the Résidences Soleil (a retirement home) on

Rue Frontenac. When she arrived at the residence a year and a half ago, there was a big red brick wall right in front of her patio door. I thought, “What a depressing view!” My mother always kept her curtains drawn. In the early spring, some activity began on the sidewalk on the other side of the street. My mother, like several others, began drawing back the curtains to see what was going on. In a few



weeks, she saw the rebirth of historical figures who had touched her life, for example Mr. Besré, Clémence Desrochers and several other artists, who were materializing on this same cold brick wall. Time would bring good things. Over the following days, this spectacular mural brought back a spark of life to my mother. The effect of just a few litres of paint well placed on a brick wall is amazing to think about. I would like to warmly thank all those who contributed to bringing back this spark of life and this loving appreciation. Ever since, my mother has kept her curtains open, and she has started to smile at life once more.”





Caisses Desjardins de l'

SOME PRECIOUS GEMS !

For eight years I have been “hunting” for fresco murals in France, in Europe and on other continents. I have had the opportunity to see many murals (www.trompe-l-oeil.info) inventories 4,000 frescoes, which makes it the world's largest database on this theme). However, I find that the murals in the city of Sherbrooke have special emotional resonance. This is first of all because France and Quebec share a certain history and an undeniable connection, but also because of the quality of its murals.

A tour of murals is not especially original in itself, since these also exist in France (Brest, Cannes, Lyon, Angoulême, Levallois-Perret), in Belgium (Brussels), in the U.S.A. (Philadelphia) and in Italy (Sardinia). Each city has its general theme—the world of the sea, comic books, film. But in Sherbrooke, the association of trompe-l’œil and murals aiming to preserve cultural, social and sociocultural heritage is virtually unparalleled.

The mural tour can be done on foot; I have done it this way. It allows you to discover the city from a new perspective. When you're taking pictures, people come up to you and want to talk, saying, *“Isn't this one lovely? There are many others in the city, they're all gems.”* And when you tell them that you came all the way from France to see Sherbrooke's murals, people are surprised; they say, *“You've come all this way to see our murals!”*

SHERBROOKE WE'RE FANS

If you ask where the following mural is located, local residents can point you in the right direction and even provide directions, which goes to show how proud local residents are of this heritage.

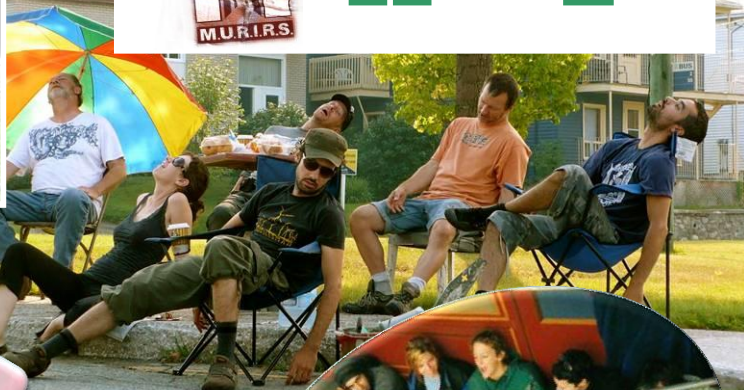


The world is currently experiencing financial crises and mural art is not immune to the collateral damage. However, to create real vitality, you need more than 12 murals—you need at least twice as many; let's hope that the Municipality of Sherbrooke will continue on this path, to the great pleasure of its tourists and inhabitants. I would like to cite Serge Malenfant, who said, *“I will always be thankful to my city for having given me the opportunity to create all these murals. Whether the adventure continues or not, the work already achieved is a source of tremendous personal satisfaction.”*

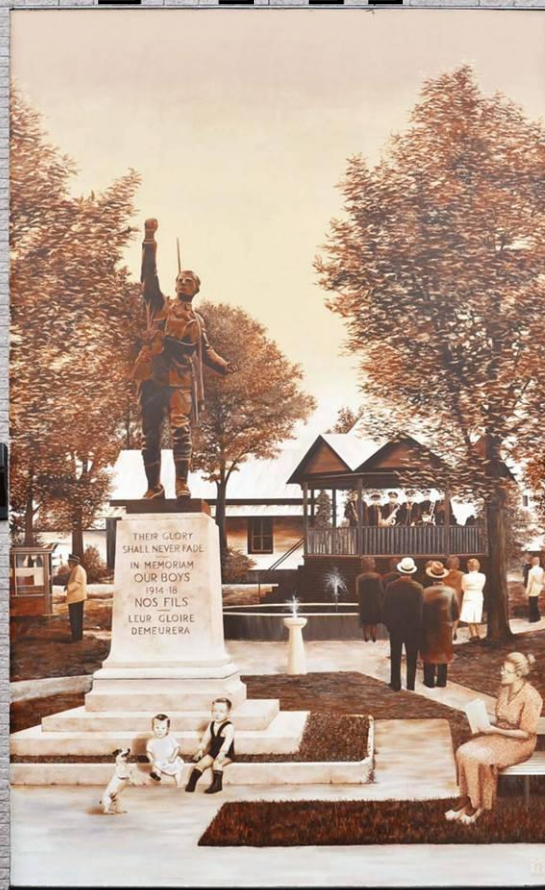




GOOD TIMES



OTHER WORK BY M.U.R.I.R.S



LG : Why do you create murals exclusively in Sherbrooke?

SM : [M.U.R.I.R.S.](http://www.murirs.org) has completed more than 30 other public or private projects outside of Sherbrooke. The organization offers conferences, workshops and support and expertise in creating murals in several other municipalities in Quebec. The aim of these projects, which are undertaken on the side, is to increase financing for murals in Sherbrooke, because M.U.R.I.R.S. exists for Sherbrooke. Of course, if someone asks us for a "turnkey" mural, we accept the request, but we also suggest that the local artists and community be involved in the project. When we started out, we primarily wanted to create murals for and with the people of our city. We also wanted to create local employment in the precarious sector of visual arts. We prefer to train muralists in their various municipalities so that they can become creators and interpreters of their own history; rather than give them a fish for a day, we prefer to teach them how to fish. We believe that this is how the murals will truly reflect their communities.

trompe-l'oeil.info EBOOK COLLECTION

Volume 1 Cornillon-Confoux : Histoire du Pinceau d'Or 2011

March 2012

Produced by www.7e-sens.fr

Photos by 7ème Sens

Written by Lionel GRIPON



Volume 2 Sherbooke (Québec – Canada) : Street Museum

April 2012

Written by Lionel GRIPON

Photos credit : [M.U.R.I.R.S](http://www.muris.ca) and Lionel GRIPON

Translation : Joachim Lépine, C. Tr.



Volume 3 Itinérance : La galerie qui met l'art dans la rue

Forthcoming

Written by Michel LEMOINE



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www.murirs.qc.ca

Visit the M.U.R.I.R.S. site



www.trompe-l'oeil.info

The gateway to urban mural art

