

Press release
Announcement

Future Espace Riopelle : Les architectes fabg wins the architectural competition

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Québec City, Wednesday, September 7, 2022 ✕ The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ) is pleased to unveil the winning preliminary design and firm of the architecture competition for the future Espace Riopelle, which will house the world's largest public collection of works by Jean Paul Riopelle, slated for inauguration between the end of 2025 and the beginning of 2026. The jury has selected **Les architectes fabg**, a Québec firm, following a prestigious competition launched in March 2022 that generated a lot of interest worldwide.

A choice that reflects Riopelle's work

The jury chose the concept proposed by **Les architectes fabg** following a meticulous examination of the four finalists. Its recommendation was then approved, after deliberation, by all members of the MNBAQ Board of Directors and the Jean Paul Riopelle Foundation.



In the course of the process, in addition to meeting all needs and complying with the funding envelope, the jury emphasized the winning firm’s extensive experience in creating cultural spaces and, specifically, museums; the quality of the reflection underpinning its presentation; the originality of the solutions proposed to redefine the MNBAQ museum complex to offer the public a smoother, more contemplative overall experience; and the intelligence of the concept developed and the team’s technical strength. The architect and the designers combined the requirements related to art, the remarkable natural environment, and the surrounding heritage buildings, bearing in mind the future pavilion’s strategic position in the museum complex. Above all, they have echoed Riopelle’s creative genius by proposing a dynamic climbing path in a signature building that will beautify the landscape. The jury also appreciated the fact that the firm is open for dialogue to adjust and enhance the concept to better reflect the project needs and constraints, such as the budget.



Moreover, the building will reflect a concern for sustainable development and be visually distinctive and eloquent. The architecture will lend itself to numerous interpretations through its terracing in keeping with neighbouring buildings that sometimes evokes the artist’s studio with its wooden ceilings and sometimes the northern environment and the Isle-Aux-Grues landscape with its green terraces displaying varied species. Natural light will bathe the proposed circuit, which will culminate in the circular space devoted to Riopelle’s masterpiece *L’Hommage à Rosa Luxemburg* (1992), where the public will also be able to admire spectacular views on the Plains of Abraham and the majestic Saint Laurence River.

A video from the winning firm offers a glimpse of the project:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ilx54KQLYeY>

A high-profile international jury

The competition jury, chaired by French architect **Dominique Jakob**, co-founder of the renowned Jakob+MacFarlane architecture firm, met in Québec City in August, in the presence of project partners, the representatives of the four finalist firms for a presentation of the proposals, and subsequently began its deliberations, to select the winning concept.

Each finalist team was asked to develop its initial conceptual approach in the form of a functional solution, with due regard to the project's needs technical and budgetary constraints. At the conclusion of this process, the level of advancement of the sketches was meant to offer an overall view of the project's conception. It was also intended to reveal the quality and depth of the reflection of the firm selected with the aim of initiating the integrated design process with MNBAQ and Jean Paul Riopelle Foundation teams.

More specifically, the jury members had to determine whether each proposal met several high-standard criteria, including:

- Respectful integration with the landscape and historical and architectural context of the location (particularly the Charles- Baillairgé Pavilion, a heritage building);
- Creation of a strong landmark at the entrance to the Plains of Abraham historic site that harmonizes with the museum complex day and night;
- Design of a distinctive, thoughtful, and high-quality structure that communicates with the nature around it and reflects the vocation of the future pavilion, namely the display of Jean Paul Riopelle's art;
- Creation of an accessible and innovative museum space in terms of visitor experience;
- Appropriateness of the formal treatment and recovery of as many systems and networks as possible (mechanically, electrically, and structurally) to meet the LEED certification target;
- Technical feasibility and compliance with the construction budget.

The jury was composed of seven members with complementary backgrounds and expertise, including renowned architects from Québec, and elsewhere in North America and Europe. The jury chaired by **Dominique Jakob** included Canadian architect **Marie-Chantal Croft**, a member of the Commission d'urbanisme et de conservation de Québec; Québec architect **Alain Fournier**, founding partner of EVOQ

Architecture; retired architect **Georges Leahy**, an expert on the renovation of heritage buildings; **Ronna Tulgan Ostheimer**, Education Director, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Massachusetts; **Jean Luc Murray**, Director General of the MNBAQ; and **Manon Gauthier**, Executive Director of the Jean Paul Riopelle Foundation and General Commissioner of the centenary celebrations.

Les architectes fabg: an impressive profile

Founded in Montréal for over sixty years but known as Les architectes fabg since 1988, the Québec firm is reputed for the quality of its achievements, for which it has received nearly 50 awards and mentions in Québec and around the world. Under the direction of **Éric Gauthier**, winner of the Prix Ernest-Cormier, the most prestigious award bestowed by the Government of Québec in architecture, the firm has overseen technically and environmentally innovative projects such as the headquarters of the Cirque du Soleil, the head office of the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (with Lemay), the Théâtre de Quat’Sous, and the Auditorium de Verdun.

The firm has recently received the Grand Prix d’excellence of the Ordre des architectes du Québec and has particularly stood out in the museum sector, by transforming the Musée d’art de Joliette, restoring the Stewart Museum, converting the former US pavilion by Buckminster Fuller at Expo 67 into the Biosphere, an environmental museum, and creating the Montreal Science Centre in warehouses in the Old Port of Montréal.

Enthusiastic reactions

Several partners and other actors involved in the process were eager to comment on this long-awaited announcement.

Christiane Germain, Chair of the Board of Directors of the MNBAQ, salutes the originality and sensitivity of the architectural proposal selected. “For my team and for all Quebecers, this project affords us a unique adventure that will reshape Québec’s cultural image through the construction of a signature building in the heart of the Plains of Abraham. The notion of territory, indissociable from Québec’s identity and Riopelle’s works, also admirably inspired the winning firm. Both the works in the Québec collection and those recently donated by patrons of the arts

will broaden the influence of Jean Paul Riopelle’s monumental work and the new pavilion will make the overall experience of the MNBAQ even more memorable. The future Riopelle Space will become a genuine source of collective pride.”

The Chair of the Board of Directors of the Riopelle Foundation **Michael Audain**, together with a group of Canadian philanthropists, is behind the historic donation totaling more than \$120 million in works and cash that made the realization of Espace Riopelle possible. Mr. Audain praises the singular character of the future pavilion, an architectural gesture that is undoubtedly in harmony with Riopelle’s oeuvre. "I salute the strength of the architectural proposal, which is in line with Riopelle's vision in terms of respect for nature and the environment, and which will offer future generations a unique place that will reflect Jean Paul Riopelle’s immense artistic legacy. This new pavilion will certainly become a place of discovery and contemplation to admire Riopelle's invaluable oeuvre and where the artists of tomorrow can find a source of inspiration. As we will soon launch the artist’s centenary celebrations, we are delighted to take another important step today towards the realization of our dream of creating a gathering place paying tribute to the impressive contribution of Riopelle to the history of art in Quebec, Canada and around the world.”

Lastly, **Éric Gauthier**, architect and partner from the winning firm, expressed his immense pleasure in winning the competition. “Our first objective was to harmonize with Riopelle. Inspired by a revealing expression of the artist who said that he was constantly fleeing, we wanted to create a building that reflects his work in perpetual motion. We therefore imagined a climbing path that would create a dynamic tension by multiplying the vista clearings on the river and nature, like his studio in the Laurentians.”

Next steps

Following the announcement of the winning firm of the architectural competition, the phases of drawing plans and specifications, and closing the Gérard-Morisset Pavilion will follow. Construction work will then begin with the opening of the new pavilion scheduled between the end of 2025 and the beginning of 2026.

The public can learn about the project's milestones and progress on the MNBAQ website: mnbaq.org/en/espace-riopelle.

The MNBAQ makes Even more space for art

The Espace Riopelle is a major \$42.5 million project made possible by a unique partnership between the Government of Québec, MNBAQ, and the Jean Paul Riopelle Foundation. The Government of Québec is contributing \$20 million to the creation of this new pavilion, with a further \$20 million contributed by the amazing generosity of the patrons of the Jean Paul Riopelle Foundation. Fondation du MNBAQ has committed to supplementing the project with a financial contribution of \$2.5 million through private-sector participation. A major fundraising campaign will be launched in 2023 to raise funds and promote this major project. A \$2.5 million contribution from the City of Québec is being added to the \$42.5 million financial package, and will allow for the creation of a brand new room dedicated to his monumental *L'Hommage à Rosa Luxemburg* (1992), a narrative fresco composed of 30 paintings. It is widely considered to be the hallmark of Riopelle's artistic vision.

The creation of Espace Riopelle marks the culmination of the centenary celebrations of the artist's birth. It will permanently house the largest public collection of Riopelle's work in the world, a collection that was enhanced last December by a historic gift of artworks valued at over \$100 million from patrons of the Jean Paul Riopelle Foundation.

The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is a state corporation funded by the Gouvernement du Québec.

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