



WHITE MARBLE: AN ELEMENT UNIFYING THE MUSEUM'S PAST... AND PRESENT

From the start, the architectural richness of the Museum complex – four pavilions from different eras with equally different structures, an apparently heterogeneous ensemble – posed a challenge for architects Provencher Roy + Associés, the project managers, as they sought to make the new Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion harmonize with the other buildings. They had to provide a unifying element for a diversity of architectural styles. It was also necessary for the Pavilion of Canadian Art to stand out from the church with a truly contemporary look and style.

The white marble used for the Michal and Renata Hornstein and Jean-Noël Desmarais Pavilions seemed a natural choice for the cladding of the new Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, to enable it to make a statement. The marble and the clear glass walls would conflict with the church but would fit in with the other pavilions. The white marble would constitute a physical and symbolic link with them. Looking south from du Musée Avenue to Sherbrooke Street where the buildings are grouped is the best way of seeing

the use of marble on the three buildings. It is an unusual sight for Montreal and Quebec, where this elegant material is rarely used.

It should be noted that this marble comes from the same quarry in Vermont as the stone used for the Michal and Renata Hornstein Pavilion in 1912 and the Jean-Noël Desmarais Pavilion in 1991. The quarry allowed the masons to cut the shafts for the columns of the Beaux-Arts-style building from a single block. Similarly, the architects insisted that the slabs of marble selected for the project should display their provenance and composition through an arrangement that reveals an entire and continuous cut along the wall of the quarry. The cladding of the four outer walls of the new Pavilion of Canadian Art will be composed of some 1,500 sheets of marble.

The twenty-seven successive slabs from sixteen contiguous blocks cut from the same wall of the quarry will re-create on the outside walls of the pavilion one and the same pattern of veining, a unique

installation in keeping with its context: the geology that distinguishes the project and its architectural solutions.

JACQUES DES ROCHERS

¹ Claude Provencher, one of the founders of the firm, has a long-standing professional relationship with the Museum, having collaborated on the institution's architectural programming and development for over twenty-five years. His realizations in Montreal also include the World Trade Centre, the J.-A.-De Séve Pavilion at UQAM, the Centre des collections muséales de Montréal and the J.-Armand-Bombardier Pavilion of the University of Montreal.

Photos Bernard Fougères, Mathieu Geoffrion and Provencher Roy + Associés architectes