

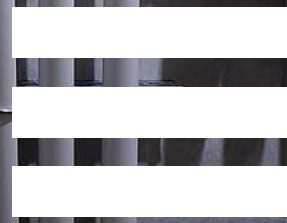
DESIGN INNOVATIONS FOR PROFESSIONALS

MONITOR

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Bjarke INGELS @ BIG Cecilie Manz Tacklebox
Paul Laurendeau Campaign Madlab/Spurse
Johnston Marklee/Diego Arraigada Moxon
Isay Weinfeld P-L Auttila ecoLogicStudio 3xn
Arne Quinze Suppose Plan01 EMBT ...



municipal theatre // doibeau-mistassini @ canada

DESIGN: PAUL LAURENDEAU with JODOIN LAMARRE PRATTE & ASSOCIATES
PHOTO: MARC GIBERT / ADECOM.CA





By the moment the new theatre officially opened its doors, 13 of its 23 season shows have been sold out. It took the Canadian city of Dolbeau-Mistassini a 30-year effort to get its own municipal theatre. The new cultural center has been commissioned to a consortium of two offices, Paul Laurendeau and Jodoin Lamarre Pratte & Associates, winners of the architectural competition.

The building serves a double function: a 491-seat auditorium «a l'italienne», and an oversized foyer to accommodate special events and exhibitions. Furthermore, the offices of the city's entertainment committee are appropriately located behind the front glass facade, above the main entrance. On the eastern side, a small court between the artist's dressing rooms, the foyer and the existing adjacent red brick building, brings in greenery and unifying contrasts of old and new, horizontal and vertical, and light and dark via the private, luminous zone (artist's green room) and the dark monumental public zone (foyer). Fluid lines are removed to achieve ultimate geometric simplicity; the openings are symmetrical and the materials sober, — and Laurendeau adds a contrast of his signature materials, glass and steel. The architect insists on the primacy of form: «It is an aspect too often neglected, it is never talked about seriously enough. Other disciplines must subordinate to architecture, and not the other way around. Initially, I did not ask myself [regarding the ceiling of the auditorium] if a horizontal surface would work from an acoustic point of view! We have created a powerful volume... acoustic parameters were integrated afterwards, and to great satisfaction.» Yet, don't take Paul Laurendeau for an architectural whip-cracker: in addition to a deep sense of theatricality, he has profound knowledge of the subject. Having studied the architecture of theatres for three years, visiting many of them in Europe and America, doing his own research work and acquiring some rare first editions to verify his assumptions, now Laurendeau intends to share his findings in a book — a sort of *vade mecum* on the architecture of «his» theatre — intended to serve as a future source of technical and conceptual reference for other architects.

Inside the building, one space unveils another, forming a row of rooms that pull out towards the visitor like Chinese drawer boxes. The entrance leads to a hall that brings you to the foyer, an expansive black symmetrical space with large windows on the sides, facing enigmatic guided doors. Doors to the auditorium barely open, the show already unfolds, revealing a vibrant red circular corridor. The drama builds up and reaches its peak under the circular gold sky: from damask to velvet, from red to black, to glittering Swarovski crystals of the central chandelier. «We've created a cylindrically shaped theatre with two shallow 2-row balconies, aligned one on the other, to avoid an overhang that would break the space (and interrupt the rhythm), because proximity between spectators and artists on stage is essential. Just as it is crucial that the public feels united,» notes Laurendeau. «The intimacy of the house creates superior acoustics for each spectator. All are part of the acoustical volume and of the general atmosphere.» Says Guy Desmarieux of Go Multimedia, stage set and multimedia systems consultant for the project: «In the theatre, there is an inevitable separation between the back and front of the house. It is in the architect's power to make that disappear... What I find most interesting in this space is its friendliness. No matter where you stand, you feel this proximity.»

FOYER
RIO TINTO ALCAN

