Québec City museum doubles space for local artists with $103m expansion
OMA-designed Pierre Lassonde pavilion opens in the Parc des Champs-de-Bataille
by Victoria Stapley-Brown | 24 June 2016

Québec City has a very special gift to celebrate this year’s Fête nationale (national holiday) on 24 June: the opening of the new Pierre Lassonde pavilion of the Musée nationale des beaux-arts de Québec, an art museum in the centre of the Francophone city that focusses on collecting historic and contemporary works by Québécois artists. “The world heritage site that is Québec City has just added a new emblem,” Line Ouellet, the museum’s executive director and chief curator, said in a statement.

Construction began in 2013 on the building, named for the museum’s chairman—who funded the institution’s $3.9m purchase of the site in 2007—and designed by the New York bureau of Rem Koolhaas’s Rotterdam-based architectural firm OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture). The project had a total budget of C$103.4m, with $41.5m in funding coming from Québec’s government and $33.7m from the Canadian government and private fundraising.
Pierre Lassonde pavilion of the Musée nationale des beaux-arts de Québec.
Photo: Bruce Damonte © OMA
Spread over five storeys—including two underground—the 15,000sq. m pavilion doubles the museum’s exhibition space and also includes an auditorium, a café and an eco-friendly rooftop garden. The glass façade was designed to connect the structure with its surroundings, the Parc des Champs-de-Bataille, and it both allows natural light into the spaces and keeps out the harsh cold of Québec’s winters.

One special feature is an underground passageway that links the new pavilion to the museum’s three existing buildings—which include a converted 1867 prison—that doubles as an exhibition space for a work from the permanent collection the museum has never been able to display in its entirety. This is the late Montréal-born Jean-Paul Riopelle’s L’Hommage à Rosa Luxemburg (Tribute to Rosa Luxemburg) (1992), a 40m-long spray-painted piece on 30 individual canvases.

The museum has organised seven exhibitions drawn from its permanent collection to inaugurate the new galleries, including Decorative Arts and Design in Québec, which looks back at the province’s contributions in craft and design since the 1950s, and Contemporary Art in Québec: from Ferron to BGL (both until 5 September).