

GRAND OPENING

ESPACE RIOPELLE – MICHAEL AUDAIN PAVILION



OCTOBER 22–25, 2026: FOUR DAYS OF CELEBRATIONS HONOURING JEAN PAUL RIOPELLE

Québec City, Wednesday, August 12, 2026 — This fall, Jean Paul Riopelle is taking roots in Québec's landscape. **From October 22 to 25, the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ) invites the public to celebrate the opening of the Espace Riopelle – Michael Audain Pavilion as it welcomes its first-ever visitors.** Riopelle was one of the most influential Québec and Canadian artists of the 20th century, and this brand-new space—an enduring legacy from his centennial festivities—is inspired by his creative freedom.

The opening of the [Espace Riopelle – Michael Audain Pavilion](#) will mark the culmination of one of Québec's biggest architectural and cultural projects. To celebrate the occasion, the Musée has prepared an **enchanting experience like none other** for visitors as they explore the **new galleries and exhibitions**.

The new space will be brimming with artistic energy during the four-day event as artists of all kinds take over. As visitors explore, they will be treated to an **unforgettable series of dance, musical, and artistic experiences**. Each day will feature new performances and unique encounters inspired by Riopelle's work—a **wonderful way to celebrate and introduce this fitting tribute to a to an artist who shaped the art world**.

“Riopelle, an artist whose name is known not only here but around the world, finally has a space entirely dedicated to him. The Musée has long wanted to showcase his work while making it more accessible, and the Espace Riopelle – Michael Audain Pavilion does so brilliantly as a place where people can connect and share discoveries. We are excited to be welcoming the public to this magnificent new building, which creates a nuanced interplay between nature, architecture, and the larger-than-life work of this influential Québec and Canadian artist,” says Musée Director General **Jean-Luc Murray**.

“We are incredibly proud to support this landmark celebration of Jean Paul Riopelle and his extraordinary legacy. Espace Riopelle – Michael Audain Pavilion marks an exciting new chapter for one of Canada’s most important artists, and Heffel is honoured to be a part of it,” adds **David Heffel**, president of Heffel Gallery Limited.

GRAND OPENING: FOUR DAYS OF POETRY, CREATIVITY, AND EMOTION



Visual art and architecture | With exclusive access to the Espace Riopelle – Michael Audain Pavilion, visitors will get the chance to explore its architecture and enjoy the inaugural exhibitions honouring Jean Paul Riopelle’s work. Guides from the Musée will also be available to show people around.

Dance | With its repertoire inspired by the Québec landscape, **Fleuve Espace Danse** has much in common with Riopelle’s work. Choreographer Chantal Caron and her troupe will put on performances throughout the building, adapted from three of their signature performances: *Prendre le Nord*, *La marée noire*, and *Êtres de bois*.

Art films | In the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion, the auditorium will be showing a looping **selection of award-winning shorts** by the contemporary dance company, whose performances invite viewers to reconnect with the nature around and inside them.

Music | Each day, students from the **Conservatoire de musique du Québec** will perform classical pieces that will echo throughout the building, creating a contemplative ambiance.

Immersive experience | Riopelle was fascinated by the icebergs he saw during his travels in the Far North. Surrounded by the music of Flore Laurentienne, you too can enjoy the majesty of these massive chunks of ice with ***Iceberg, la route des géants***, a **virtual reality experience** by director Estelle Marcoux.

A peek behind the curtain | The new **visible storeroom and restoration lab** will provide a fascinating insight into art conservation and restoration. Members of the team will be available to talk about the work that goes on behind the scenes.

Drawing and creation | Visitors of all ages can let their creativity run wild in a **workshop** inspired by Riopelle's evocative landscapes and the choreography of Fleuve Espace Danse. In tandem, **roaming artists and writers** will capture the magic of the grand opening with impromptu sketches and texts inspired by the art, the building, and the discoveries.

GET YOUR TICKETS EARLY

Don't wait! Early-bird rates are available until September 7. Receive \$5 off non-Member tickets and a special rate for MNBAQ Members. Spaces are limited. [Tickets are available here.](#)



AN EXCEPTIONAL SHOWCASE FOR RIOPELLE'S WORK

Jean Paul Riopelle (1923–2002) was an artist associated with the Automatiste movement whose body of work, which drew deeply on Québec's natural world, earned him a prominent place in the history of modern art. As early as the 1940s, his free-spirited, gestural style raised the profile of Canadian art around the globe. To this day, he remains an important figure in the Automatisme and Abstraction Lyrique movements.

As the **largest space entirely dedicated to a Canadian artist**, the Espace Riopelle – Michael Audain Pavilion will help promote and preserve the artistic legacy of the world-famous painter, sculptor, and lithographer. It is a crown jewel in the museum complex, offering spectacular views over its natural surroundings for a truly unforgettable visitor experience.

The new three-storey, \$84 million building will showcase more than 130 paintings, sculptures, and works on paper by Riopelle, coming from the Musée's collection—the largest public collection of his art. It will also feature a new take on the national modern art collection, with around 100 pieces by some 50 Québec artists on display.

Treasures from the MNBAQ's archives will join recent acquisitions and a number of major loans. Visitors will enjoy **more than 60 works by Riopelle and his contemporaries donated** primarily by philanthropists **Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa**, as well as by **Pierre Lassonde**. These include extremely rare works by Riopelle, as well as pieces from his early and late career that illustrate the full depth and richness of his body of work.

WHERE ARCHITECTURE MEETS NATURE

The new building, designed by **Les Architectes fabg**, uses steel, glass, and spruce wood to honour Riopelle's deep connection to the Laurentian and boreal landscapes. **Its terraces and massive windows will offer unparalleled views of the Plains of Abraham and the St. Lawrence River**, blurring the lines between nature and the indoors.

The Espace Riopelle – Michael Audain Pavilion is the fourth building in the museum complex. It is built on the site of the former central pavilion, between two heritage buildings: the Charles Baillairgé Pavilion (1867), which was the former Québec City jail, and the Gérard Morisset Pavilion (1933), which houses the national collection of ancient and modern art. It will be connected to all of the other buildings, including the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion (2016), serving as a hub for museum visitors.

In addition to the galleries, the **new 5,000 m² building will be home to amenities** like a spacious lobby, a café, a boutique, cloakrooms for school groups, rentable spaces, and a visible archive and

restoration lab. This airy, light-filled space is ideal for serene contemplation and connection with the works on display.

FOUR MOVING INAUGURAL EXHIBITIONS

On opening, the new building will house **four exhibitions and a series of experiences guided by sense and emotion.**

RIOPELLE. THE EXPRESSION OF GESTURE

This [major retrospective](#) on the second floor will celebrate the exceptional career of an artist who was driven by a quest for freedom and self-improvement. A selection of masterpieces—including several monumental paintings, rarely exhibited works, and a few loans—will illustrate the diversity of Riopelle’s body of work over a career that lasted more than 50 years.

Through seven themed sections, visitors will get to see Riopelle’s Automatiste paintings, his famous “mosaics” from the 1950s, his magnificent bestiaries, his many prints inspired by the Québec landscape, and the surprising mixed-technique works of his last years. The scope of this reference exhibition and the significance of the works it displays make it **one of the most important exhibitions ever devoted to the artist.**

NATIONAL MODERN ART COLLECTION: *CHALLENGING*

The building will also feature a new take on the [national modern art collection](#), putting it in dialogue with pieces by **Paul-Émile Borduas** and other artists in the Automatiste movement. The exhibition will showcase works by some 50 artists, including **Suzanne Duquet, Marcelle Ferron, Adrian Hébert, Prudence Heward, Fernand Leduc, Jeanne Rhéaume, Marian Dale Scott, and Liliash Torrance Newton**. Themed sections will illustrate the major trends and pivotal moments in the history of modern art in Québec, from the 1920s to the 1960s.

ART AND EMOTIONS

On the ground floor, [Art and Emotions](#) will show video testimonials from people who knew Riopelle. It will also include an interactive research project, developed in collaboration with the **Co-DOT lab at Université Laval’s School of Psychology**. Emotion was central to Riopelle’s creative process, so the project will encourage visitors to measure their emotional response to 10 of the artist’s works.

TRIBUTE TO ROSA LUXEMBURG

In the literal and metaphorical high point of the visit, a circular display of *Tribute to Rosa Luxemburg* (1992) takes pride of place on the third floor. The fresco is now mounted on curved panels, creating a nearly 360-degree panorama of this 40-metre piece. It is accompanied by a **unique olfactory experience developed by the Chartier World LAB**.

IN ADDITION TO THE EXHIBITIONS

A wide array of outreach activities, including creative workshops and guided tours, will be available starting in the fall. The Musée **chatbot**, launched in 2022, will also be ready to answer questions in the main exhibition and the national modern art collection. As they enjoy the art on display, visitors can use their smartphones to interact with this innovative AI-powered system to learn more about the works of Riopelle and his contemporaries.

ABOUT

THE MUSÉE NATIONAL DES BEAUX-ARTS DU QUÉBEC

The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ) is the living memory of Québec art and artists. With a rich collection of over 42,500 works, its functions are to make known, promote, and preserve Québec art of all periods, from ancient art to contemporary art, and to ensure a place for international art through acquisitions, exhibitions, and other cultural activities. Its raison d'être is **to bring people together through art**. mnbaq.org

The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is a government corporation funded by the Government of Québec.

PARTNERS



The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec and its Foundation extend their sincere gratitude to the Heffel Foundation for its generous support as the presenting partner of the opening celebrations and the exhibition *Riopelle. The Expression of Gesture*.

The chatbot, the olfactory experience, and the *Art and Emotions* research project were made possible by the Museum Innovation Incubator, supported by the Secrétariat à la Capitale-Nationale.

PHOTO CREDITS

Top to bottom: Espace Riopelle – Michael Audain Pavilion campaign | *Êtres de bois* by Fleuve Espace Danse. Dancer: Geneviève Robitaille // Photo: Elisabeth Morin | New Espace Riopelle – Michael Audain Pavilion | Rendering: Les Architectes fabg. Graphic design: Philippe Legris.

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