On the banks of the Saint Lawrence River, in the city of Quebec, the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec has been extended with a new building designed by OMA’s New York office in collaboration with local firm Provencher Roy. The imposing glass structure is devoted to contemporary art, temporary exhibitions and Inuit art. The brief for OMA’s first project in la Belle Province asked for a building that would respect the neighbouring Saint-Dominique Church, while merging the presence of the Battlefields Park (in which the museum’s three existing pavilions are situated) with that of the city. OMA’s proposal was for a building comprising three volumes stacked one atop the other in a staggered configuration, thus creating a cascade that links the park and the city. On one side, visitors are drawn into the building; on the other, the roofs of the new volumes ‘continue the topography of the park’, says OMA partner Shohei Shigematsu.

OMA’s interiors are orientated towards the park. Skylights and other openings connect indoor spaces with outdoor surroundings. Circulation flow directs visitors through the galleries and onto the terraces. A stairway projecting from the façade gives them the impression of walking outside while still being in the museum proper. The use of a hybrid steel truss system allows for a spacious interior, unobstructed by columns. Mezzanines produce numerous sightlines between different parts of the building.

The extension, which is called the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion, increases the museum’s exhibition area by 90 per cent. It is connected by an underground corridor to the museum’s Central Pavilion in the park. This 120-m-long passageway houses a monumental painting by Quebec’s famous artist, Jean-Paul Riopelle, who completed L’Hommage à Rosa Luxemburg in 1992.