



The green tower featured in the exhibition, *Structures Végétalisées* (2012) at the Maison de l'architecture.

5 Favourites

Hangout Boulangerie Arhoma and Café Pavé

Area Espace pour la vie, which houses a botanical garden, biodome, insectarium and planetarium

Location Édifice Belgo, a venue of art galleries and artists' centres; the Maison de l'architecture du Québec

Souvenir Apple icewine and St-Viateur bagels.

Montreal in three words Cultural effervescence and diversity

Man of the Land

Daniel Corbeil has a green vision of the city's future.

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Photos Martin Giraud/Shoot Studio

Montreal-based sculptor Daniel Corbeil's main theme is landscape, but he's moving more and more towards architecture. His most recent exhibition, appropriately hosted by the Maison de l'architecture du Québec in Montreal, featured his *Structures Végétalisées*. "The challenge," according to Corbeil, "is to make landscape inside buildings and present it in a tangible way, beyond the slick virtual pictures you usually

see in publications, where there is always this stereotype of the future, with unreal vegetation, flocks of birds and windmills." In his installation, he offered a vision that was both more prosaic and more poetic than the scene he's described. We talked to him at the Maison de l'architecture on one of the last days of the exhibition. For the occasion, Corbeil wore a white lab coat that gave him the appearance of a doctor or an old-school

scientist. Asked about how serious he is about his green structures, he smiled and replied: "It's fiction."

Are you criticizing Canadian society's negative engagement with its natural landscape and resources? Daniel Corbeil:

What I try to do is to question our relationship with landscape and nature. Maybe in 20 or 30 years time, self-sufficient, sustainable buildings will be the norm, just as energy-efficient buildings have become the standard today.

Does your work have a specific relevance for Montreal? I don't know. I believe the relevance of my work is broader than that.

An example would be my exploration of global warming. The green structure I envisage raises more general questions.

Do you have a place in mind for erecting a prototype of your green tower? In the image I made, you see it next to the Olympic Stadium [in Montreal]. The tower has more or less the same scale as the pylon of the stadium.

How realistic is the tower design? Nature is complex, so I don't know if you could actually make this utopia. If you look at the enormous machinery and infrastructure needed to maintain the different biotopes inside the Montreal Biodome, it's clear that a tower like this would be extremely difficult to realize at this time. It was already difficult to keep all the vegetation in the model of the tower in good condition during the exhibition.

What's next? I'm going to work on hydroponic culture on a bigger scale. I want to create a built space with vegetation that people can actually walk through. _

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Another structure from *Structures Végétalisées*.