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THE FUTURE PROOF HOME



Design for Conscious Living

FRAME

MI-2 HOUSE

A black sheep in the suburban surroundings of Laval, adjacent to Montréal, the 160-m² MI-2 House champions minimalism, efficiency and enduring design. Nevertheless, the bungalow-style riverside residence – part of a triptych of three family homes – is directly influenced by the context of the suburb, reflecting a study on its vernacular architecture.



Driven by the ambition to produce mastered, magnified and appreciated spaces, Marie-Josée Dupont and Olivier Blouin established Dupont Blouin Architectes in 2017. Prior, Dupont worked at firms Lapointe Magne et Associés and Jodoin Lamarre Pratte architectes. A trained architect, Blouin is also a celebrated spatial photographer.

How would you define the vernacular architecture of Laval?

OLIVIER BLOUIN: Québec’s traditional architectural styles heavily influenced Laval. These styles include the Québécois farmhouse, which typically features a rectangular or L-shaped plan, steeply pitched roofs, dormer windows and exterior finishes in materials such as stone, wood or brick. The use of gable roofs and symmetrical façades is also common, and these elements can be observed in Laval’s older neighbourhoods.

MARIE-JOSÉE DUPONT: The city’s architecture also reflects its urban development and suburban expansion. As it has grown, it has seen the emergence of diverse architectural styles, ranging from detached single-family homes like bungalows to multi-unit residential buildings, commercial complexes and institutional structures. These buildings exhibit a mix of architectural influences, including elements of modernism and post-modernism.

Where does MI-2 House sit in this context?

OB: The residence is somewhat in contrast with its surroundings. Even though the house is a product of its context, through initiatives such as maintaining the single level structure of the previously existing chalet, the architecture itself is very minimal and clashes as a result. Its elongated grey bricks, claustra and absence of details are not your typical suburban language.

MJD: While it’s important to respect and retain local design language, it’s also crucial to strike a balance with contemporary needs, functionality and evolving architectural practices. With the MI-2 residence, we used the area to engage in a dialogue with the surrounding’s vernacular. Nevertheless, the minimal light grey house makes a striking statement, clearing out the ornamentation that you usually see on suburban façades. We like to emphasise quality of space and natural lighting. When you drive into a North American suburb, it’s shocking to see how some houses have upscale materials in the front, where nobody spends that much time versus the backyards, where cheaper, lifeless materials are often used.

What challenges did you face in designing for the site?

OB: As the site was small and nearby a boulevard that can become crowded, we had to optimise it. We faced challenges in fitting all the necessary elements while ensuring a functional and aesthetically pleasing design. To overcome this, we created a hallway dividing the house in two, distributing all the key spaces of

Photos Olivier Blouin



the programme and maximising the floor space efficiency. Striking a balance between aesthetics and practicality is critical for transforming limited spaces into appealing and functional designs.

MJD: Being located near a busy boulevard can introduce high levels of noise pollution. Developing an inner courtyard, along with a noise-filtering opening that provides light and circulates air, was a solution. Planting a tree in the middle of this courtyard was our way of addressing the impact of hot summers and the need for shade. Doing so can enhance thermal comfort and reduce the reliance on mechanical cooling systems. In the winter, the welcoming sunlight plays a role in passive heating and saves on the electrical bill. Additionally, due to the Rivière des Mille Îles, we had to raise the structure, apart from the garage, to protect from flooding.

What do you think are the most crucial focus points for designers and architects working in the residential realm today?

OB: In today’s residential realm, designers and architects are increasingly focusing on sustainable and perennial design – the creation of timeless, enduring homes that can adapt and evolve with changing needs and lifestyles – as well as the use of local materials. Energy-efficiency strategies – including passive solar design, well-regulated appliances, fixtures and insulation and high-performance windows – play a big role in sustainable residential design. Integrating smart home technologies like AI thermostats can also help you save energy and update spaces to residents’ living habits. Designers must additionally prioritise the indoor environmental quality of residential spaces. This involves factors such as natural lighting, ventilation, thermal comfort and acoustics.

MJD: By focusing on these crucial aspects, we hope to contribute to creating sustainable, resilient and contextually appropriate residential spaces that align with the evolving needs and values of today’s inhabitants, while reducing environmental impact.



With this Québec home, classic suburban stereotypes are overcome to achieve a perennial design



