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# Inner Strength

A BRICK FACADE IN MONTREAL LOOKS SEVERE BUT IT OPENS TO A GEM-LIKE COURTYARD

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In January, **La Géode** in Montreal earned Canada's first LEED v4 Platinum rating for multi-residential construction. With the developers expecting Silver, the project squeaked into the highest level of green building certification by acing several subcategories and scoring a total of 80.5 points.



Jean-François St-Onge, co-founder of ADHOC architectes, explains that the five-unit project – of two volumes bookending a central courtyard – is of Moorish inspiration and a new typology in the Plateau, an area characterized by brick rowhouses with deep, gloomy floor plates and small backyards.

“We wanted to maximize the land’s livable area with two buildings,” St-Onge says about La Géode’s quintessentially postage-stamp-size lot, just eight metres wide by 24 metres deep. “The client was a real estate developer and loved that we optimized the site by almost doubling the square footage.”

With La Géode’s foreboding dark-brown brick facade street-side and sparkling triangular-metal-tile cladding system (from local manufacturer Tuiles 3R) inside, the architect aimed to reproduce the dual identities of the courtyard homes he saw while travelling in Spain and Morocco: streets lined with high, imposing and nearly windowless walls that often concealed lush oases of flora, fauna and water features.

The borough’s heritage wonks required that ADHOC design the public-facing facade in brick. The client specified not-brick for the more private courtyard facade. “These two constraints were an opportunity to give the two treatments a narrative,” he says. “We tried to amplify their contrast as much as possible by creating distinct exterior and interior worlds.”

On the outside, La Géode’s facade features open-work masonry, an allusion to its namesake’s mineral crust. Also, St-Onge says, “I wanted to revive this typical decorative tradition that emphasizes the hand-crafted nature of brick.”

In the courtyard, the zeal of the *zellij* seems Gaudíesque. St-Onge reveals that a light well in Barcelona’s Casa Batlló inspired him to attempt a gradient in grey triangles. He feels mixed about the alternate ending – the middle shade was on back order. As is, the charismatic, hexagonal-lattice mosaic is still otherworldly: hive-like and intergalactic. [adhoc-architectes.com](http://adhoc-architectes.com)