

# hospitalitydesign

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## gentile pizza parlour

**Design firm:** Atelier Zébulon Perron, Montreal

**The details:** Café Gentile has been a Montreal institution for the last six decades, cementing the Gentile family as local legends. When the current generation of restaurateurs, Anthony Gentile, wanted to expand on his family's legacy with an authentic 1970s and '80s New York-style pizza joint, he tapped Zébulon Perron (the designer worked with Gentile on his first restaurant in 2016—the second outpost of Café Gentile, located adjacent to the pizza shop) to bring his vision to life. “We wanted to do something informed by nostalgia with retro elements that also resonated with Anthony’s emotional memories [of traveling to New York as a child],” Perron says.

Some elements of the former corridor were retained and repurposed, including ceiling and metal slats that were restored to their original 1980s glory. Pendants that look like jellyfish hang above the bar, while metallic paint adds an ambient glow. But “the main gesture is the diagonal pattern” that pervades the narrow space, says Perron. “The idea was to break this linearity with a dynamic geometry.” The throwback look is enhanced by tongue-in-cheek elements like the laminate wall panel that winks to the quintessential basements of the '70s and '80s. “There’s something immersive about it. You’re transported to another place, another time” Perron says. “The objective was to create a space that would be provocative and memorable.”





# perspectives **project breakdown**

By Will Speros

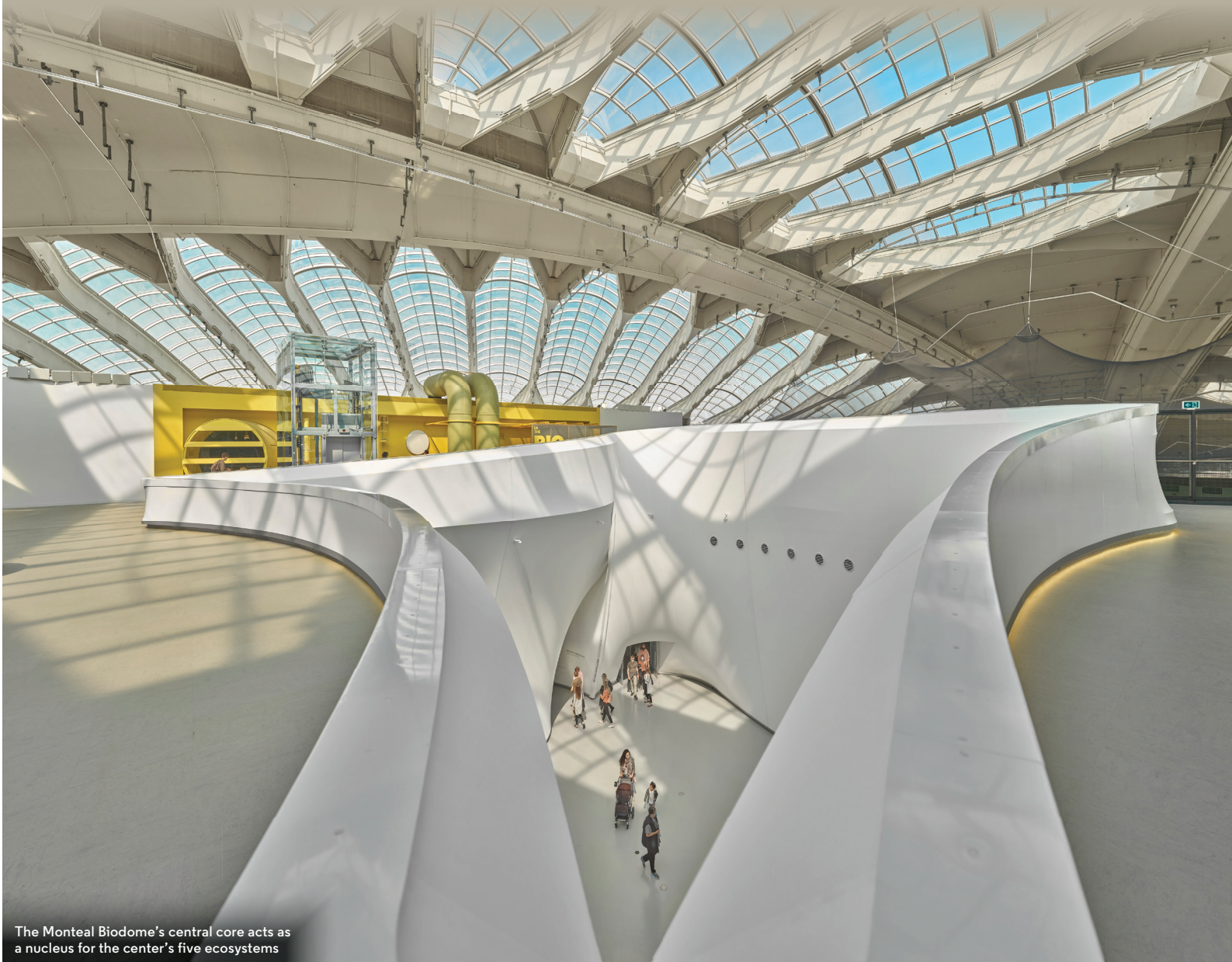
Photos by James Brittain and Marc Cramer

## DOWN TO EARTH

Montreal's Biodome invites visitors to create their own journey

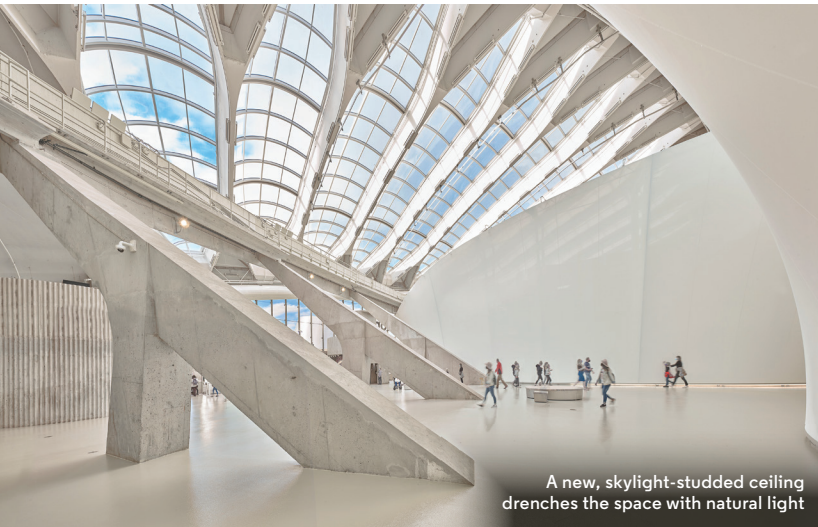


Originally constructed as the Velodrome for the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games, the Montreal Biodome in the French-Canadian metropolis' Olympic Park stands as a testament to the city's grandiose architectural legacy. Space for Life, the governing body that oversees the Biodome as well as the park's planetarium, insectarium, and botanical garden, launched a competition in 2014 to enhance the experience between visitors and the science museum's distinct ecosystems. The winning entry, led by local firm KANVA, reconsiders the human relationship to the species living

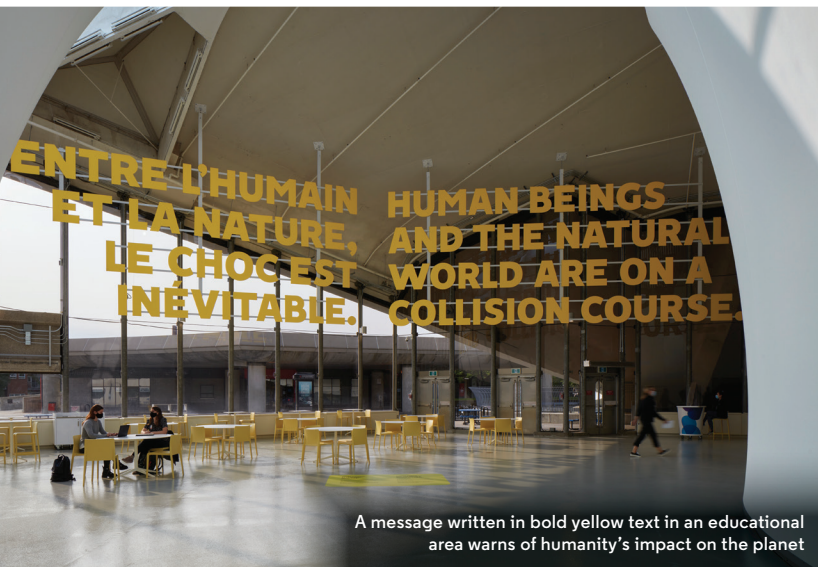


The Montreal Biodome's central core acts as a nucleus for the center's five ecosystems





A new, skylight-studded ceiling drenches the space with natural light



A message written in bold yellow text in an educational area warns of humanity's impact on the planet



Aluminum tunnels wrapped in a white fabric membrane transport guests between ecosystems at the Biodome

onsite with hopes to inspire discovery and restore “a sense of dignity and respect to this heritage building and to reveal to the public some of its great architectural features,” says KANVA principal and cofounder Rami Bebawi. For his purposes, it was helpful to approach the landmark as a human body, with particular attention paid to the heart, head, and hand. “The comparison was very much an intercellular morphosis,” Bebawi explains. “We considered it to be a living entity. We took spaces that were underused and started moving things within the Biodome itself.”

With sensitivity to the existing conditions, KANVA created a new core—or heart—to link the venue’s five ecosystems (the Tropical Rainforest, Gulf of St. Lawrence, Laurentian Maple Forest, Labrador Coast, and the Sub-Antarctic Islands), as well as a new ceiling outfitted with skylights to drench the nucleus in sunlight. From the core, visitors are transported via bowed aluminum tunnels wrapped in a white, membrane-like textile that contrasts the concrete interiors. Although unable to see the ecosystems while enveloped in “eco-transit,” occupants are exposed to the scents, sounds, and temperatures of each biome before feasting their eyes upon it. KANVA’s revamp establishes a non-linear

choreography that invites visitors to curate their own journey for a more personalized bond with nature. “There’s a form of ritual that allows you to have a different view of nature and perhaps to create a form of attachment,” Bebawi says.

Conceived as the head, a belvedere frames an aerial view of the entire biodome for guests, along with the mechanics hidden from visitors on the ground. “You can’t be in wonderland all the time,” Bebawi says, “and when they’re on the belvedere, they get to learn about it.” Visits culminate in an exhibit area that highlights global initiatives aimed at sustainability and preservation. Rendered in both English and French, the message “Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course” punctuates the educational space, aiming to stir guests to take action to preserve our planet and the species with whom we share it. “People don’t like to have their hands slapped,” Bebawi says. “But if you show them hopeful ways of change—the hand, the handprint—that becomes a positive. Perhaps the momentum will go beyond the institution.” **hd**

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