



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Montréal 

UNESCO City of Design
Member of the Creative Cities Network since 2006

10 Things to know about

MONTREAL UNESCO City of Design

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Design: A driving force of cultural and economic life in Montréal

Design is undeniably a strategic force in the city, reflected in some \$750 million in economic benefits and approximately 21,720 jobs generated by this sector. Moreover, 65.3% of the Québec design industry workforce resides in the Montréal region. Design is the leading sector in the cultural industries, with benefits that amount to 34% of the total economic impact of culture. (Source: study by the Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine du Québec, 2001)

Montréal is the only city in North America to have established a Design Commissioner position within its administration. In existence since 1991, the job is dedicated exclusively to development and promotion of design in the city. Since 2006, when the Design Montréal Office was created, five other positions have been created to fulfill that mission.

The Municipal Action Plan: Design de ville | Ville de design

Adopted in 2005 by the municipal administration, the Design de ville | Ville de design action plan aims to incorporate the concept of design innovation into the full spectrum of decisions and actions influencing the built environment, to intensify promotional and educational efforts, and to spur the international networking of made-in-Montréal design. A further goal of the plan is to standardize the practice of competitions, workshops and expert panels to foster excellence in design and widen the role of designers in actively building the future of the city.

The Design Montréal Office

Created in January 2006 by the Ville de Montréal, the Design Montréal Office is entrusted with the mission of implementing the municipal action plan aimed at improving design throughout the city and positioning Montréal as a City of Design. Its actions are divided along three main lines: guidance in the design commissioning process, communications, and networking.

Montréal's international reach and influence, provided by Commerce Design Montréal

Initiated and developed by the Ville de Montréal over a period of 10 years (1995–2004) with support from the professional design milieu and several public- and private-sector partners, the Commerce Design Montréal contest was aimed at making Montréal merchants aware of the benefits of investing in the design quality of their premises with the help of qualified professionals. Since 2003, at the request of other cities, Montréal has been exporting the concept. Eight licences have been granted, to the cities of Trois-Rivières, Québec, Canada; Saint-Étienne, Lyon and Marseille, France; Brussels, Belgium; Luxembourg; and Eindhoven, the Netherlands; as well as to the Times Square District in New York City. In 2006, the impact of Commerce Design was acknowledged by UN-HABITAT, which named it among the recipients of the Dubai International Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment.

Design Montréal Open House

Organized since 2007 by the Design Montréal Office in collaboration with the design industry and in partnership with the Government of Québec, the annual Design Montréal Open House is aimed at raising awareness of design and architecture trades while showcasing the richness of Montréal talent in the field. Over two days, members of the public – young and old, aficionados and the uninitiated – are invited to come and meet, in their workplaces, creators of Montréal projects that have won recent national and international competitions and contests in architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, industrial design, graphic design, fashion design and urban planning.

A grant for emerging Montréal designers

Created in 2008 by the Ville de Montréal, the Phyllis Lambert Design Montréal Grant rewards the talent of a Montréal designer with fewer than 10 years' professional practice who has demonstrated exceptional quality in studies and work as well as marked interest in the city. The grant must be used for a professional development project taking place in one of the cities of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. The Founding Director and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Montréal-based Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), Phyllis Lambert is recognized internationally both for her contribution in advancing contemporary architecture and for her concern for the social issues of urban heritage conservation and the role of architecture in the public realm.

International organizations

Since 2005, Montréal has been the site of the head office of the International Design Alliance (IDA), a worldwide organization dedicated to bringing together the various stakeholders active in the field of design internationally. The IDA consists of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID), the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA) and, more recently, the International Federation of Interior Design.

Training and research

Montréal is home to a host of renowned educational institutions, including some 20 college-level teaching institutions, two French-language and two English-language universities, and more than 50 research chairs, including the UNESCO Chair in Landscape and Environmental Design at Université de Montréal and four others with a design focus. There are also several college-level programs offering technical training in all of the design disciplines.

Venues, promotion and events

Montréal boasts a significant number of venues for the presentation of design along with well-known organizations that highlight the creations of designers and architects from here and elsewhere. These include the Design Centre of Université du Québec of Montréal, the Society for Arts and Technology, the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts, as well as the MONOPOLI and Commissaires galleries. Montréal hosts many design events that are singular platforms for creation and presentation, including La Biennale de Montréal, the Montréal International Interior Design Show, the International Festival of Films on Art, Montréal Fashion Week and the Fashion & Design Festival. The city is also the site of an architectural research centre and museum that is one of the most prestigious of its kind in the world, the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA). Founded in 1979, the CCA is an avant-garde cultural institution devoted to raising public awareness of the role of architecture in society, promoting scholarly research, and stimulating innovation in design practice.