

# INTERIOR DESIGN®

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*into the  
woods*



# Canadian/Scandinavian

Scandinave les Bains, a spa by Saucier + Perrotte, brings a touch of Stockholm to Montreal







*At a naval repair shop transformed into a spa, the onetime loading dock became the site of a hydrotherapy pool.*

**Nature is mother** as well as muse for Saucier + Perrotte Architectes. A photomural of windswept prairie and churning river runs the width of one floor at the firm's office. "If I could ever make something as beautiful as a tree, then I'd truly be an architect," Gilles Saucier says. And while the firm's thermal spa, Scandinave les Bains Vieux-Montréal, may not resemble a trunk, branches, and foliage, the interior does evoke a natural cavern.

It was Saucier + Perrotte's nearby menswear boutique for Michel Brisson that first caught the attention of Scandinave les Bains president Benoît Berthiaume. (There's a flexible garment-display system, its electrical guts exposed, and an existing stone hearth, illuminated by incandescent fixtures rather than fire.) A spin-off of a 10-year-old Mont-Tremblant location—where hot baths, cold plunges, and saunas are scattered across a picturesque ski-resort landscape—the city spa was to be "an urban place, something softer than the rugged experience of Scandinavian bathing outdoors," Berthiaume says. ➤



**Top, from left:** Reception has a ceiling lined in ipe, flooring of epoxy-finished concrete, and a desk faced in tinted glass. The loading dock's garage door became an etched-glass window. **Bottom:** Carrara marble mosaic tiles clad sections of wall as well as the surround of the cold-water plunge pool, set into a corner of the 31-foot-long hydrotherapy pool.

**Opposite:** Fluorescent fixtures create zigzagging lines on the poplar planks in the sauna.



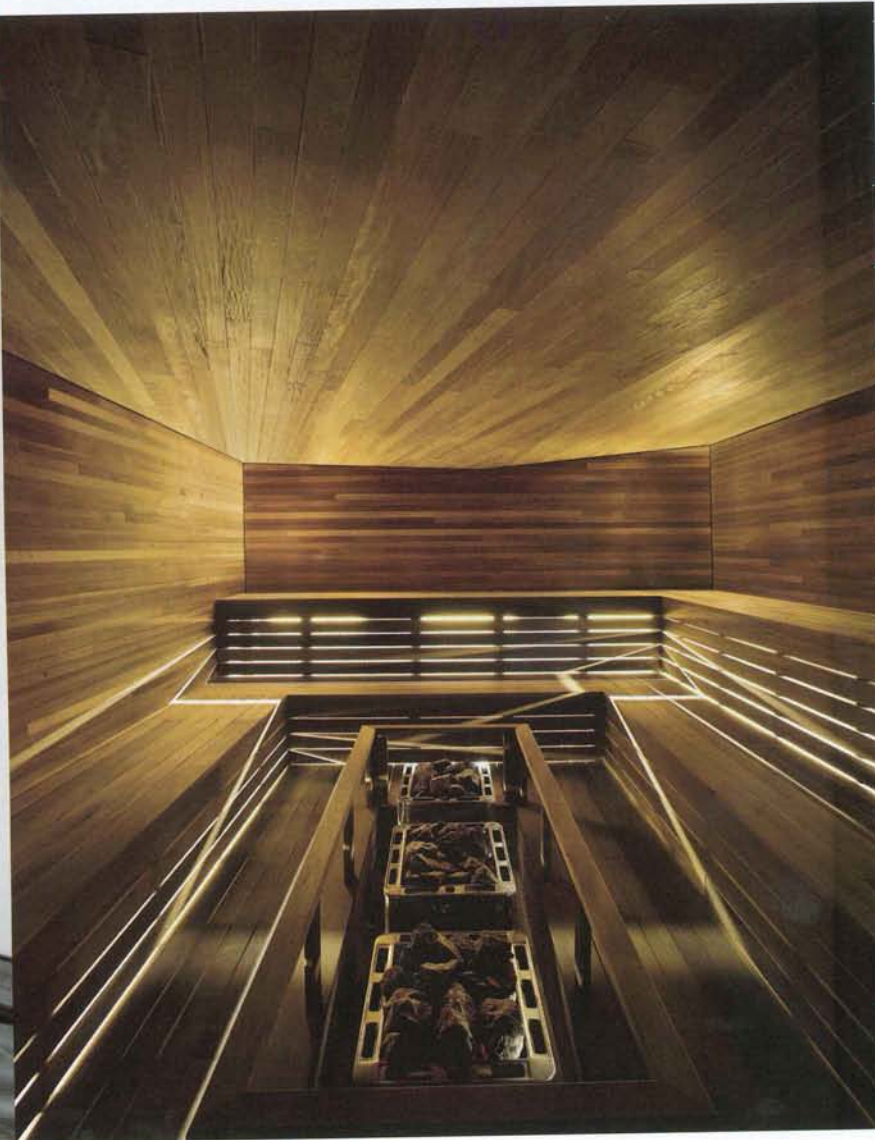
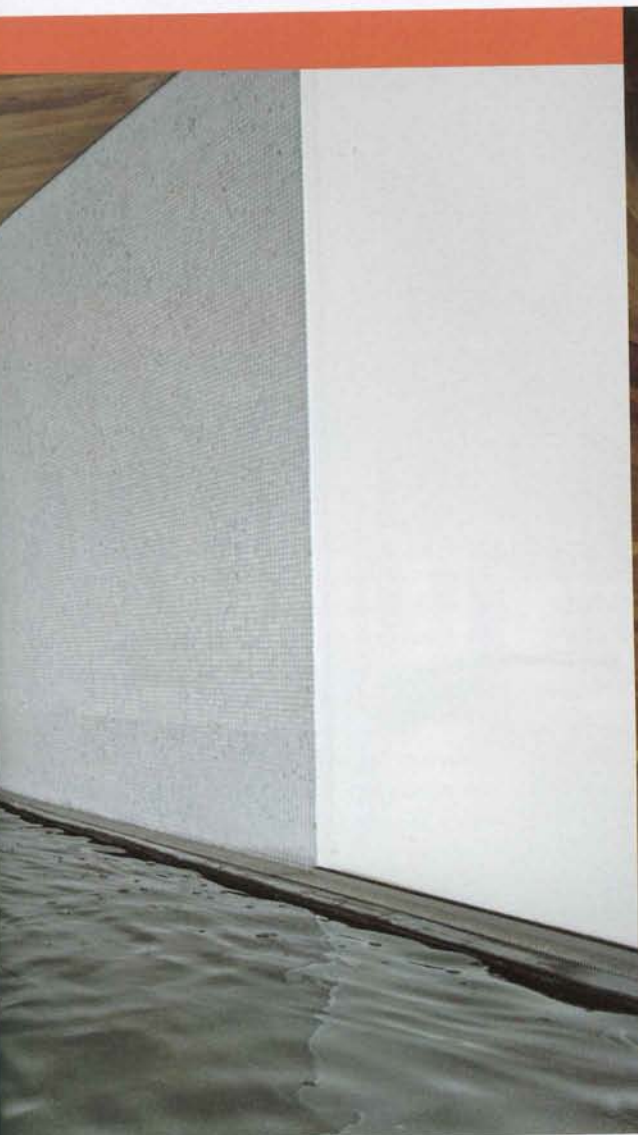


By the time he tapped Saucier + Perrotte, he'd already secured 10,000 square feet in a 1964 building constructed on an 18th-century foundation after a fire. The concrete building, facing Montreal's port, originally served as a rough-and-tumble naval repair shop, so it features a ground level raised several steps above grade and a loading dock punched into one corner. "When I pulled my Mini Cooper inside and closed the door, I knew that loading dock would become the pool," Saucier says. Where trucks once backed in and out, visitors now wade or perhaps perch on the submerged bench built into the pool's black-pigmented concrete walls.

Hydrotherapy jets pulse below the surface of the water. Above it, a slender stainless-steel spout releases intermittent waterfalls, pounding necks and shoulders into submission. Gentler

cascades wash down expanses of acid-etched glass. One of them faces the street, allowing the blurred silhouettes of pedestrians to pass through, while they in turn catch hazy glimpses of activity inside. Saucier compares this huge window to a billboard. André Perrotte adds, "Keeping water away from the original structure and showcasing it in a creative way was essential." To avoid water damage, the architects sprayed on a liquid vapor barrier inside and out before pouring a new concrete floor and adding Carrara marble mosaic tiles or a gray epoxy finish.

Extending back from the pool, then turning a corner to hug the rear of the building, the main circulation route connects the other shared amenities: a cylindrical freestanding cold shower, a round eucalyptus steam bath, a sauna, a ➤







**Top:** Patricia Urquiola designed the chairs in the juice bar. **Bottom, from left:** The rear wall in this treatment room, one of 12, is part of the 18th-century foundation. Three sheets of acrylic enclose the cold shower. **Opposite:** Aside from the Carrara marble trim, tile in the eucalyptus steam bath is antislip ceramic.





juice bar, a lounge. That curve, Saucier says, “creates a longer perspective. Everything is hidden by something. It’s an interior landscape.” The landscape metaphor drove Saucier + Perrotte’s choice of details. Marble-tiled planes are folded, resembling crystalline facets or mountain slopes. Shallow angles also define the *ipé* surface of the dropped ceiling. The junction of stone and wood “represents where ice and heat meet,” Saucier continues. “The concepts of warm and cold are important.”

Which isn’t to say that absolutely everything is an abstraction of nature. In the juice bar and the lounge, for example, gentle creases are replaced by right angles. The building’s original foundation is visible behind sheets of black-tinted glass, and the ceiling is punched with four deep rectangular skylights. It’s here that visitors drink smoothies, read, and nap on sleek black recliners or plush gray beanbag chairs while resting between hot and cold baths or waiting to be escorted away, through an electronic sliding door, to one of the treatment

rooms laid out in a U on the opposite side of the building from the hydrotherapy pool.

Massages are available, but beauty regimens aren’t. Despite the Scandinavian name and look, Scandinave les Bains is actually modeled on a Turkish bath. “Something anchored in the tradition of the city,” Saucier explains. “A place for socializing as well as hygiene.”

#### PROJECT TEAM

JEAN-PHILIPPE BEAUCHAMP; ANNA BENDIX; TREVOR DAVIES; YVES DE FONTENAY; SAUCIER + PERROTTE ARCHITECTES, GROUPE STAVIBEL; STRUCTURAL ENGINEER, LEROUX, BEAUDOIN, HURENS & ASSOCIÉS; MEP, SOCIÉTÉ DES JARDINS-LAROUCHE; GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

#### PRODUCT SOURCES

FROM FRONT WALKER GLASS CO.: CUSTOM WALL, WINDOW PANELS (POOL AREA). THROUGH CLOT: WALL, FLOOR TILE (POOL AREA, JUICE BAR, SHOWER). SISTEMALUX: LINEAR FIXTURE (RECEPTION). PPG INDUSTRIES: DESK FACE MATERIAL. FORMICA CORPORATION: DESKTOP SURFACING. GROUPE SERVICOM: PANELING (SAUNA). MDF ITALIA: CHAIRS (JUICE BAR). KRISTALIA: TABLES. VICCARBE: STOOLS. NOMAD: MASSAGE TABLE (TREATMENT ROOM). BARRISOL: STRETCHED CEILING SYSTEM. AQUARIUM ASP: CUSTOM ENCLOSURE (SHOWER). GROHE: SHOWERHEAD. APPIANI THROUGH CLOT: CERAMIC TILE (STEAM BATH). THROUGHOUT BOIS MARON: CEILING PLANKS. SICO: PAINT.