

# Beyond the Stadium

While Montreal's architectural typologies offer a variety of roofs with endless possibilities on formal, political and social levels, one roof in particular has been a subject of controversy for the past 50 years: the big O. Designed by French architect Roger Taillibert for the 1976 Olympic Games, the stadium features a unique retractable roof hung from a 165-meter tower. Despite its completion in 1987, a full ten years beyond its intended deadline, the roof has been mired in controversy, incurring millions in government expenses and demanding ongoing maintenance due to issues such as collapses, tears, and leaks. Currently, a \$870 million project is underway to replace the problematic roof with a stable, fixed structure, half a century after its original construction.

While the Olympic Stadium and its roof are iconic and aesthetically significant elements of Montreal's skyline, the persistent failures and controversies surrounding them cannot be overlooked. Rather than channeling immense budgets into massive construction efforts for a mere functional cover, this proposal envisions a more poetic, conceptual, and alternative use of the space: transforming the roof into a site for contemplation, gathering, and, most significantly, a political statement. Despite this project affecting every Montrealer spanning many generations, the most concrete manifestation of this project is the events of Corridart in 1976 (paragraph b). This vision is deeply influenced by these events, where art installations displayed along a curated street exhibition were unlawfully demolished just days before the Olympic Games. This act, which remains one of the most poignant and unjust incidents associated with the games, has yet to receive an appropriate response despite numerous attempts.

This proposal conceives a suspended structure that floats in the expansive void between the stadium, tower, and sky, serving as a permanent exhibition space for the Corridart artworks that were destroyed. It also includes an archival section featuring films, testimonies, maps, and other documentation of the events, expanding into a public space where creative and artistic expression can freely soar above the city, symbolically reclaiming the stadium and its historical failures. The geometrical and formal approach seeks to reconcile the intricate and sculptural formal qualities of the Olympic stadium, as well as the lightness and organic nature of the roof fabric. The position in space is a homage to this audacious retractable roof that would be suspended in the air in a dramatic, surreal manner before completely expanding or retracting. The platform would be accessed through the funicular originally designed for tower access, revealing a cinematic spatial construct open to all visitors, extending the urban landscape into a realm of poetic and socio-political significance.

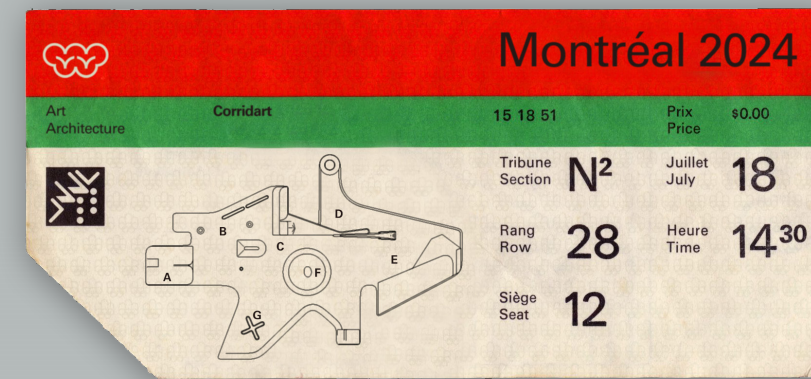


Fig. 01-Ticket to access Public Roof and Exhibition

## a Olympic Games

The Olympic Stadium in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, is a striking symbol of the 1976 Summer Olympics. Designed by French architect Roger Taillibert, its futuristic architecture features a unique, inclined tower—the world's tallest—and an elaborate system of cables supporting a retractable roof, a pioneering design at the time. This ambitious construction aimed to embody innovation and the spirit of the Olympics. However, the stadium became notorious for its problematic roof. The original retractable roof, made of Kevlar, was plagued by technical difficulties and failed to operate as intended for years. It was eventually replaced by a fixed roof, which also suffered from structural issues, including tears and leaks. These problems contributed to the stadium's nickname, "The Big O," reflecting both its shape and the substantial financial burden it imposed on Montreal's taxpayers. Despite these challenges, the Olympic Stadium remains an iconic part of Montreal's skyline and a testament to bold architectural ambition.

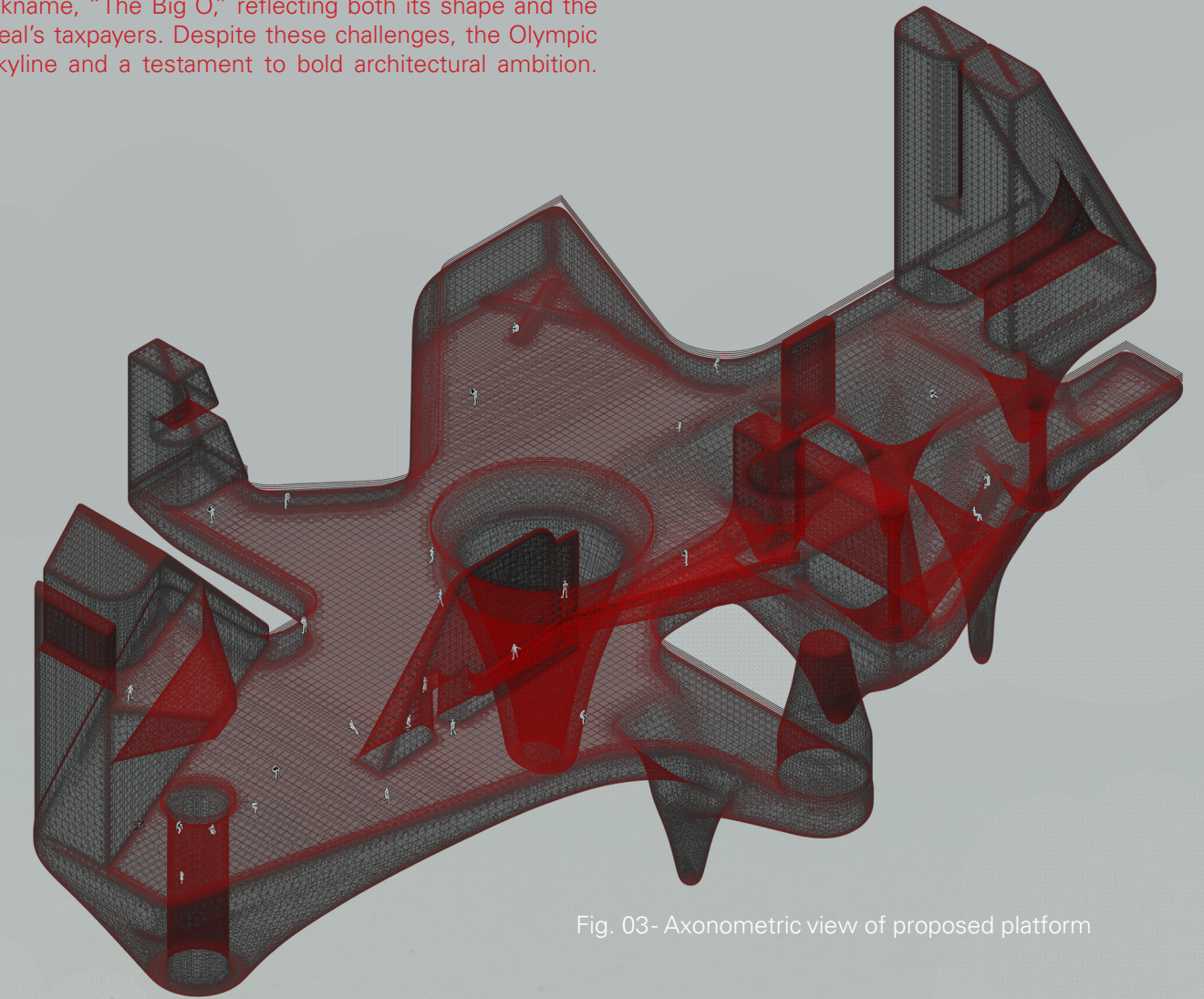


Fig. 03- Axonometric view of proposed platform

## b Corridart

Corridart was an ambitious public art exhibition held in Montreal in July 1976, alongside the Summer Olympics. Stretching over 8 kilometers along Sherbrooke Street, the city's main thoroughfare, Corridart showcased the works of around 60 artists, integrating various forms of art such as sculpture, installation, and performance. The event was curated by Melvin Charney, a Montreal architect and artist, as a means to reflect Montreal's cultural, social, and urban identity. However, just days before the Olympics' opening ceremony, the exhibition was controversially dismantled by order of the city's then mayor, Jean Drapeau, who deemed it unsuitable and an eyesore. The destruction of Corridart led to a significant outcry from the artistic community and sparked a debate about censorship, the role of public art, and the limits of artistic expression. Despite its premature end, Corridart has since been remembered as a pivotal moment in Montreal's cultural history, symbolizing the tensions between artistic freedom and political authority.

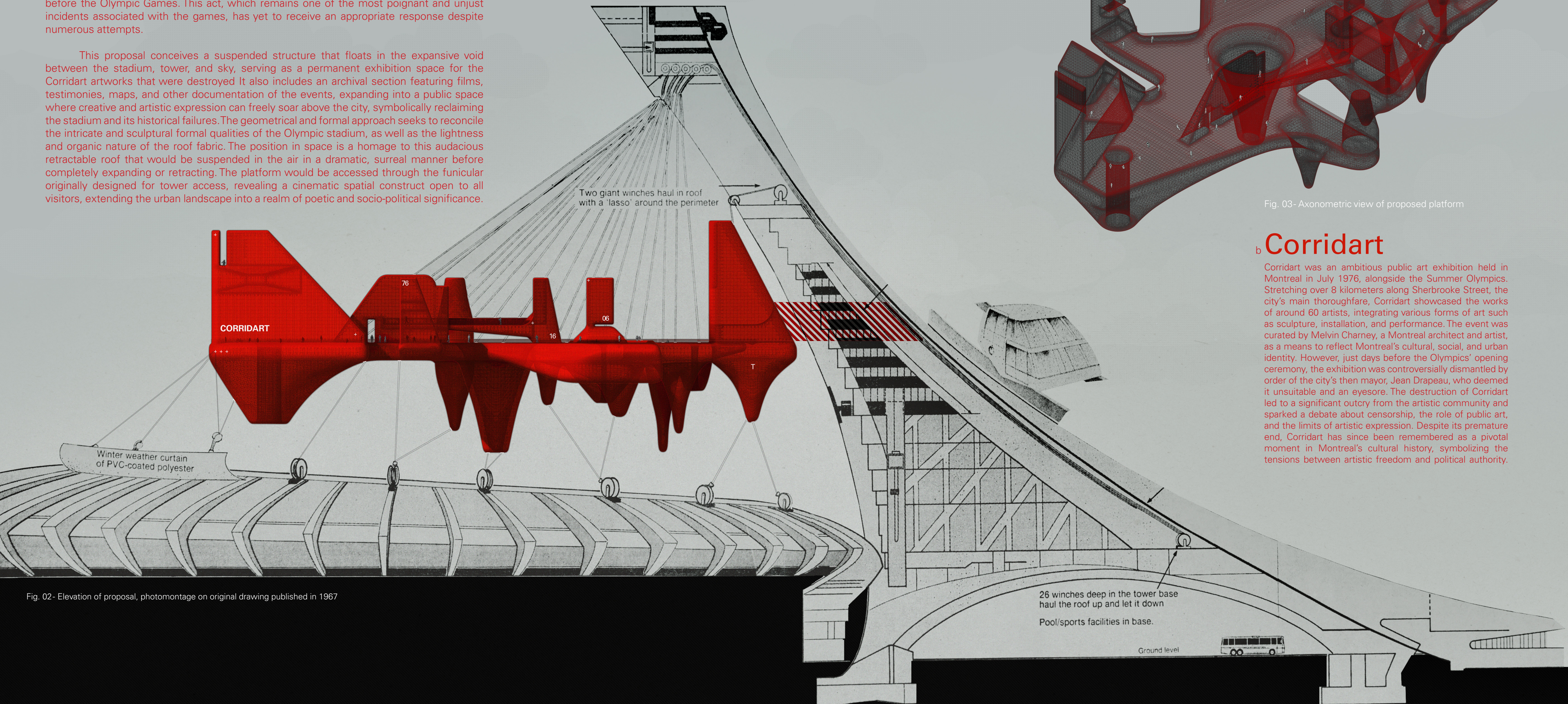


Fig. 02- Elevation of proposal, photomontage on original drawing published in 1967



# Montréal 2024

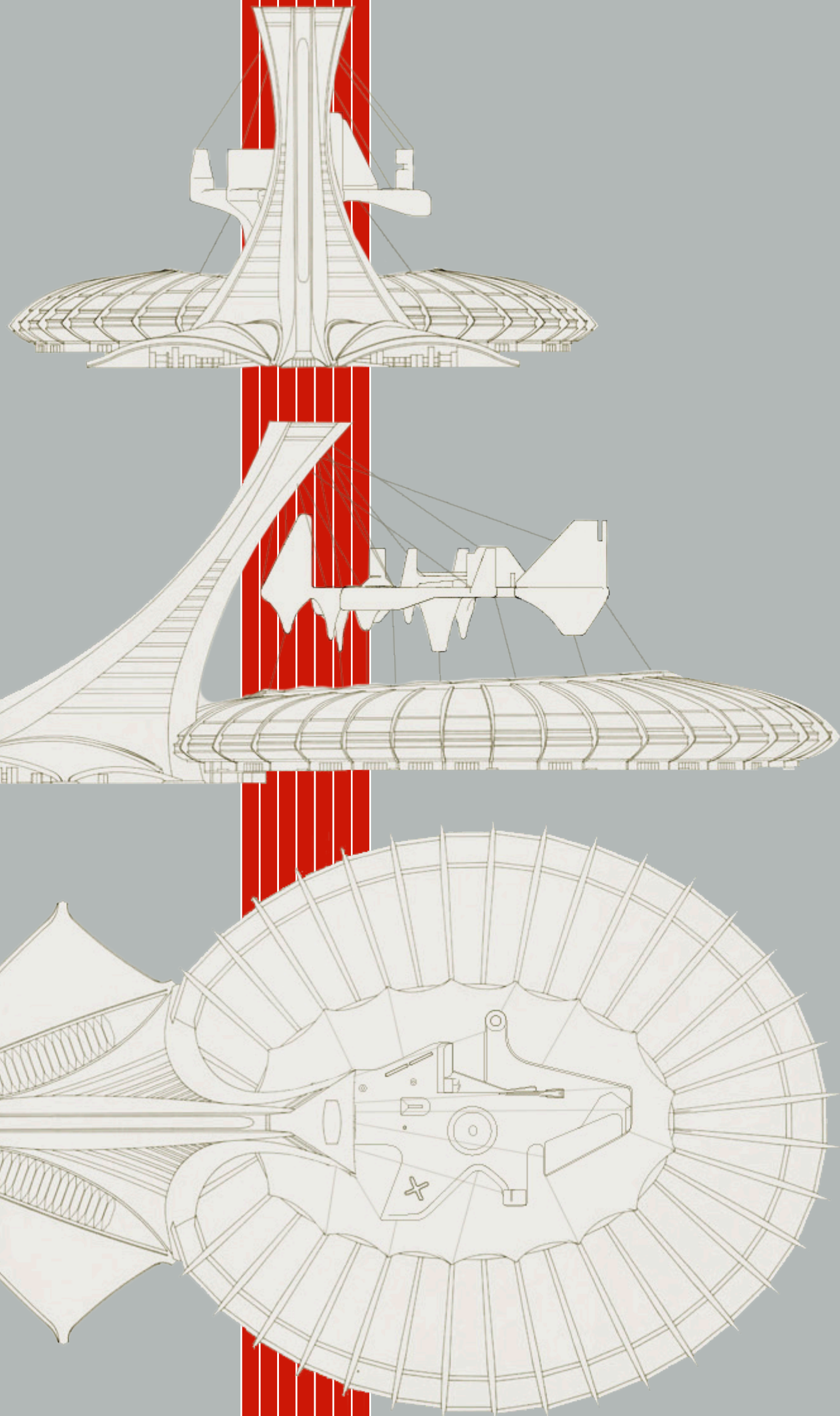


Fig 04- Views of proposed roof- Photomontage on original Olympic games poster.



Fig. 05-View from the Olympic Stadium towards the sky

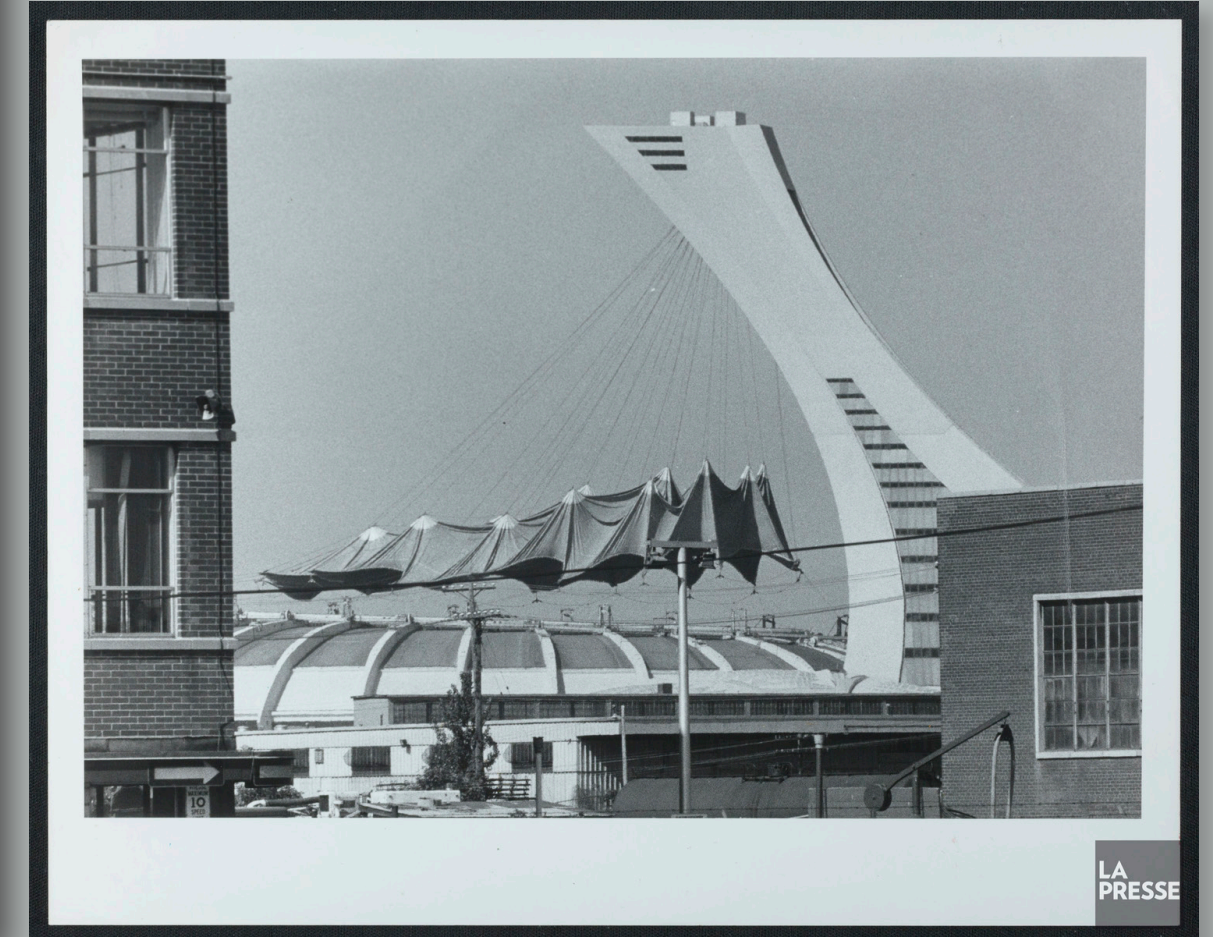


Fig. 06- Retractable Textile Roof in transition



Fig. 07-View from the proposed Corridart Exhibition

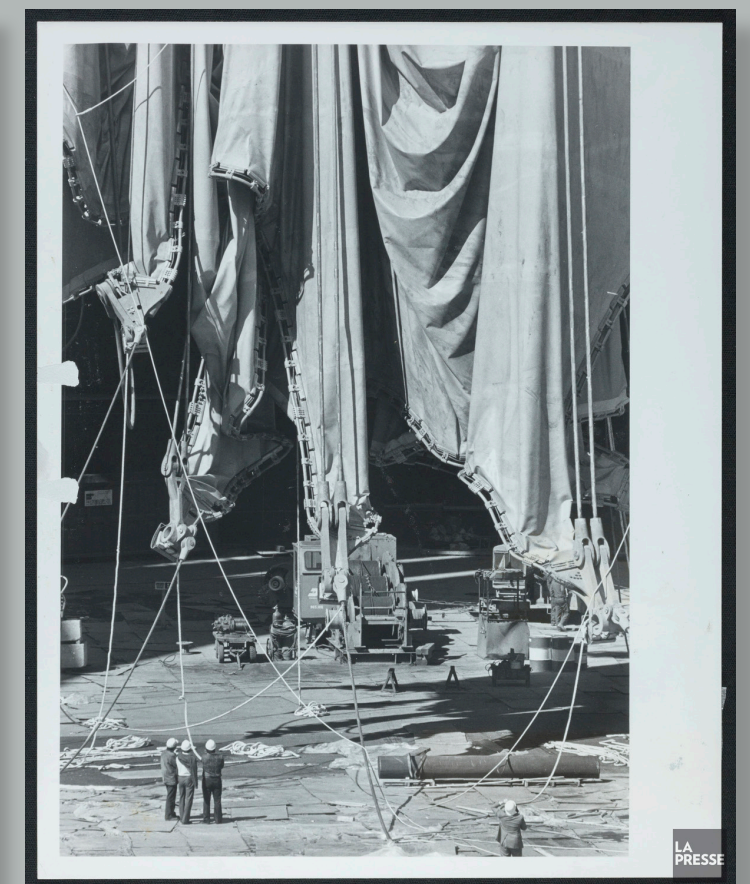


Fig. 08- Original roof cover

- Fig. 01 - Official ticket for the Montréal 1976 Summer Olympics from the Canada Modern Archive.
- Fig. 02 - Olympic Installations Board, SOCODEC, Lavalin Inc., Gazette reporting. 1976. Drawing by Doug Sephton.
- Fig. 04 - Montréal Olympic Stadium Poster, 1976. Owned by the Canada Modern Archive.
- Fig. 05 - Photomontage on:Toit du Stade Olympique, BAnQ Vieux-Montréal.
- Fig. 06 - Toit du Stade Olympique, BAnQ Vieux-Montréal, [https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/47218307/docref=kAkDmQH5JOYndGe\\_osatVQ](https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/47218307/docref=kAkDmQH5JOYndGe_osatVQ)
- Fig. 07 - Photomontage on: Toit du Stade Olympique, BAnQ Vieux-Montréal, [https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/47218307/docref=sxIPPNKONPPF-sUukS\\_ARwww](https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/47218307/docref=sxIPPNKONPPF-sUukS_ARwww)
- Fig. 08 - Toit du Stade Olympique, BAnQ Vieux-Montréal, [https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/47218307/docref=n97t9L3L\\_GcG74M5xOVmTA](https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/47218307/docref=n97t9L3L_GcG74M5xOVmTA)