



No.
02

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MAKING A SCENE

A CONVERSATION WITH REZA AZARD

French design firm Projectiles opens the eyes of museum visitors to new sensations.

Paris-based architectural practice Projectiles has developed a talent for putting together attractive interiors and displays for museums to make exhibitions that are much more engaging. A conversation with Projectiles co-founder Reza Azard.

How would you define your studio's approach to exhibit design?

Storytelling is important and you should never forget to keep the subject matter at the fore of the exhibit when you are designing an interior space in a museum. We don't want to push information onto people but invite them to come in and engage with the material, whether it is a written display or an interactive screen. I compare our work to cinematic storytelling. In films, directors may use silence, or pauses, to help the viewer process information. What we try to do is not overload the viewer when they enter a space. The entrance to an exhibit needs to catch their attention but it shouldn't hold them for too long.

What tools do you use to create your exhibits?

You have to tell a story with the space and use materials to help you. For the Le Grand Musée du Parfum, which is housed inside a classic Parisian residence, we wanted to tell the story of fragrance by designing an unusual sculptural display made up of flowers that would each emit the smell of a particular ingredient when visitors approached them.

These flowers were sculpted from Corian® Solid Surface, which is very malleable and which allows you to start with a blank canvas and create very interesting displays. We also used the material for an exhibit in the Château de Versailles – the Galerie d'Histoire that recounts the palace's architecture – by creating these white panels with engraved designs onto the solid surface that mimicked traditional wallpaper. These were set in contrast to the very elaborate oil paintings that hung on the walls and below them we placed suspended blocks in Corian® Solid Surface, which again offered a detachment from the classic wood flooring. At times you use materials to reference the subject matter. For a museum in Texas that tells the story of raising cattle and the West, we had a ceiling with a metal frame structure that recalls the corral used by farmers to keep in their livestock. It provides a sharp contrast to the contemporary white space you expect to see in a museum.

How does designing museum interiors differ from residential?

In a house, you think about the inhabitants and the usage of each room. With a museum, you have to consider first the subject matter and then the walk through that the visitor will take. Putting together the scenography for a museum exhibit is like creating a musical composition. It has to have a certain rhythm, a certain pace. The idea is to create an inviting space that is engaging but one that will also be able to entice people to move from one room



PROJECTILES

Projectiles founders Hervé Boutter, Reza Azard and Daniel Mészáros.

OPPOSITE: Galerie d'Histoire exhibit project by Projectiles, Château de Versailles, France; decorative wall cladding and suspended blocks in Corian® Solid Surface (Glacier White color); photo courtesy of Projectiles; fabrication of Corian® by Créa-Diffusion.



ONE-ON-ONE

to the next. For this you can use sound or light to capture people's attention or play around with the ceiling height to create tension and encourage them to move from one room to another.

How has museum design changed over the years?

I think we are moving away from the traditional white box in which museums exhibit pieces. You see now the language of architecture in dialogue with the language of art. A museum space can be used to provoke people, provide confrontation with the art. Look at the Serpentine Pavilion in London. Today, art is coming from everywhere. We see it in the street – think of the works of Banksy. The museum of tomorrow will no longer be a homogenous space, always spotless, functional and discreet. It will be a public space: a garden, a square, a place of worship.

How important is technology today in exhibit design?

I think technology is helpful but it should not be the goal when you are putting together a project. If you rely too much on technology, fancy touchscreens and so on, the subject matter gets lost and the visitor becomes passive. The problem in our society now is that we are more and more in front of a computer screen at home or at work. It is important to remember the human element. We want to create an exchange of ideas and thoughts where people can interact with each other and the space as they move through it and admire a work or exhibit. Sometimes we use technology to surprise people. We had a portrait gallery at the end of an exhibition where the paintings spoke whenever the visitor came up to them just like in the scenes you see in the Harry Potter movies.

project-iles.net



THIS PAGE: Top, National Cowgirl Museum, Fort-Worth, Texas; Left, flower-shaped scent dispensers in Corian® Solid Surface (Glacier White color) in exhibit hall at the Le Grand Musée du Parfum, Paris; photo courtesy of Projectiles; fabrication of Corian® by Créa-Diffusion.
OPPOSITE: Galerie d'Histoire exhibit gallery, Château de Versailles, France; decorative wall cladding in Corian® Solid Surface (Glacier White color); photo courtesy of Projectiles; fabrication of Corian® by Créa-Diffusion.

