

WHAT IS EXHIBITION DESIGN?

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ESSENTIAL DESIGN HANDBOOKS

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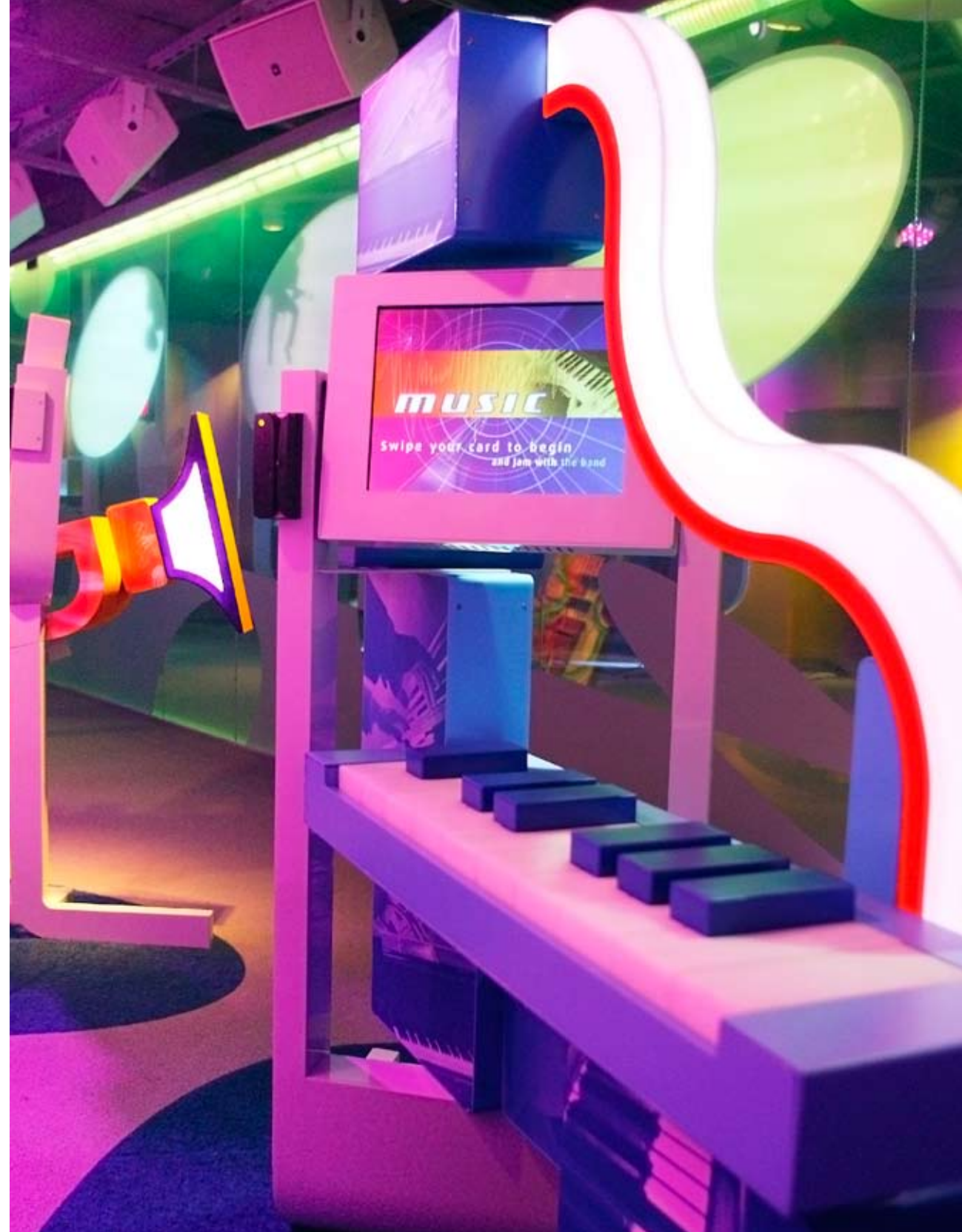
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What is exhibition design?

A tremendous amount of research has gone into uncovering exactly when humans first began to communicate and how that evolved into the myriad forms of communication we use today. One thing that is clear is that somewhere along the line—perhaps quite early on—people started using objects and the environment around them as tools in satisfying their instinctual impulse to expose, enlighten, celebrate, revere, sell, and interpret aspects of their experience. These “environments that communicate” can be seen as the precursors of a typology of human experience, as well as an increasingly recognized—if not well-defined—area of creative practice: exhibition design.

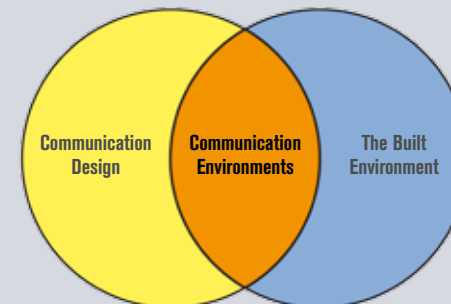
This book is organized around the recognition that there presently exists a broad and varied range of projects that constitute the realm of “exhibition,” and that, for our discussion, the qualities they share are more important than the many ways in which they differ. Further, it must be noted that while we are at a point in our history where numerous professional and trade organizations, as well as institutions of higher education, are catering to and offering academic degrees in the field of exhibition design, the fact is that we would be hard pressed to call it a profession. It might be more accurate to characterize exhibition design as an integrative process, bringing together in varying degrees architecture, interior design, environmental graphic design, print graphics, electronics and digital media, lighting, audio, mechanical interactives, and other design disciplines. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to deny

its distinct identity or its impact. Much attention has been given to the power that environments have for imparting and interpreting information, involving audiences, and influencing understanding. And while we cast a large net over a wide range of projects in capturing this field of practice, it is what they have in common that defines them as a group.

From museum exhibitions, retail spaces, and trade shows to themed entertainments, information kiosks, visitor centers, World’s Fairs, and expositions, exhibition design involves itself in creating experiences in real time, utilizing space, movement, and memory to facilitate multilayered communication. In whatever type of venue or situation their skills are engaged, exhibition designers work in multidisciplinary teams with their clients to help them tell their stories to their desired audience. They physically shape the experience, often acting in the role of composer, orchestrator, choreographer, and conductor, to ensure that the intended messages are delivered in the most compelling and meaningful way. They harness the powerful interpretive potential of space to deliver narratives to human beings, who are “hardwired” to receive messages through this medium. Melding communication design and the built environment, exhibition design creates environments that communicate.

Below: Venn diagram

This diagram defines the blending of communication design and environmental design to create a fusion: environments that communicate. Exhibition design, environmental design, public art, and technology design all fall into this camp.



Right: Hollywood Shadow Project

Designed by Cameron McNall. Nothing shows the blending of the barriers between storytelling, environmental design, exhibition design, and public art better than the *Hollywood Shadow Project*. The intention is to evoke memory, as it is constituted via photographs and movies, and present this memory on the site of its invention: Hollywood. All of the project sites incorporate buildings and businesses involved in making movies. It is also significant that the sculpture silhouettes were captured via optical means and then reprojected via the sun, which offers both light and motion. The installation leaves it to the audience to interpret the story. Is it a narrative of the past, a commentary on the present, an attempt to establish an identity for the future, or just a way of establishing a wonderful sense of space and place?





Figurine Empties, URART Gallery
 Designed by Burkhardt Leitner constructiv, Akin Nalça Tanıtım ve Tasarım Hizmetleri Limited, and Sabine Mescher-Leitner. This exhibition at the URART Gallery in Istanbul uses the configuration of objects in space to tell a story.



Left: A Sign of Democracy, National Center for the Preservation of Democracy
 Designed by C&G Partners. This flap sign displays inspirational quotes, poems, questions, and statements about democracy. Unlike normal flap signs, this one has no labels or markings on it other than the letters that appear when the flaps move. When it is blank, it is mute. The spirit of democracy comes alive in this piece, which changes every so often to a new quote or poem line by line, letter by letter, in a noisy cascade that can be heard throughout the lobby.



Immersive exhibitions
 These exhibitions are completely immersive environments, capturing a literal look and feel of a place, and deepening the experience with multiple interpretive areas. Below right: *The Rock Island Line: Building a Railroad, Building a Dream*, The Putman Museum. Designed by Project Arts & Ideas. Below left: *Capture of the U505*, Chicago Museum of Science and Industry. Designed by Christopher Chadbourne & Associates with the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry and Edwards Technologies.



A brief history of exhibition design

There are two caveats one must accept when attempting to trace the history of exhibition design. The first is that, as with many phenomena, not to mention disciplines, pinpointing their beginnings in time or place is often quite difficult. Springing as they do from innate human urges and responses to external factors, they often present themselves in various cultures simultaneously and manifest themselves and develop at different rates. The second consideration lies in the fact that defining them can be tricky. They continue to evolve; they are slippery and hard to catch. In the case of exhibition design, we speak of a mode of communication that has meant different things at different times, continues to change and expand, and, in fact, is not even recognized universally as a discipline at all.

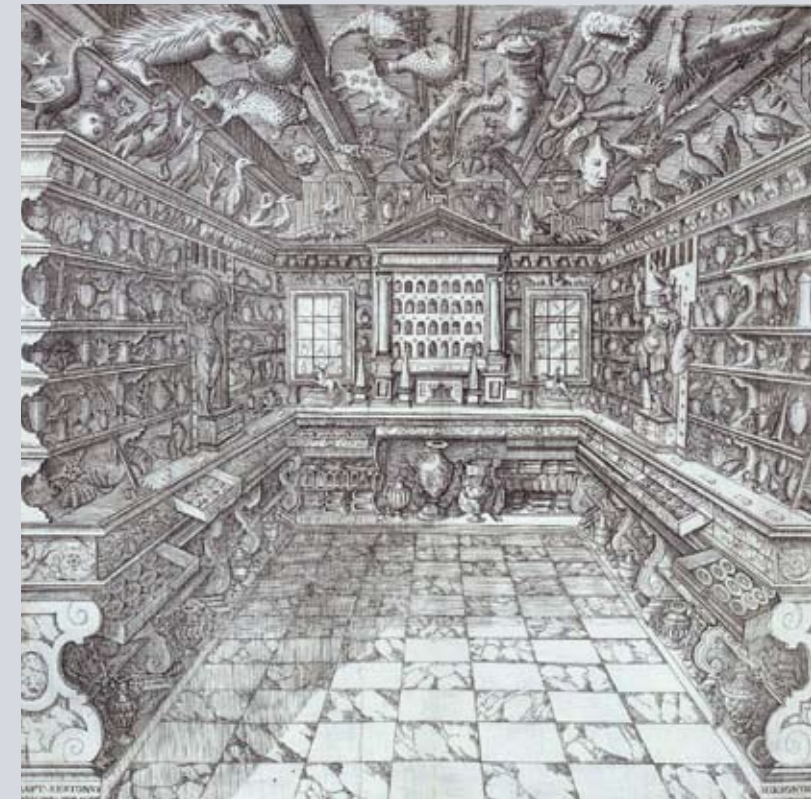
In scanning the history of exhibition design, it is nonetheless possible to note a few large-scale trends. For instance, that exhibitions have moved toward increased democratization. Once the exclusive province of the rich, the powerful, and the elitely educated, both access to and participation in the development of exhibitions has gradually come to include people at all levels of society. Another fascinating evolution has been the extreme

broadening of the exhibition design vocabulary. From its beginnings in the static display of objects, we have seen forays into increased interpretation and didactic explanation, all forms of physical and electronic interactivity, multimedia presentations, architecture, theater, dance, performance art, and environmental graphics. And it is not by accident that we choose this point in time to assess and reflect upon the roots of exhibition design, for it has recently come fully into its own as a factor to be dealt with in the worlds of art, design, and communication. The public, as well as reviewers and commentators have begun to take notice of the important role that design plays in the character and success of visitor experiences of all kinds. Universities have responded by offering programs and degrees in exhibition design; professional and lay publications critique the quality of design; museums, retailers, trade organizations, and other public venues rely on exhibit and display design to further their aims and achieve their goals.

Cabinets of curiosities

Cabinets of curiosities emerged during the seventeenth century as people began to privately display and classify objects from all areas of the world that were considered to be exotic. Some of these exhibits were thought to represent models of the world, in that they contained as many specimens as possible. They were often organized and displayed in very unusual ways. Frequently composed as fully immersive environments, with objects seemingly arranged more for aesthetic effect than scientific explication, items were grouped together simply because of their color, or because they were all birds or flowers, or all the same shape. Some may call it an irrational organization but it was one that was based on a kind of primitive taxonomy. While taxonomy in the scientific realm was more concerned with classifying objects according to type or genre, species or origin, these miniature spectacles might appear to be specifically designed to create an astonishing presentation of grotesque oddities.

Francesco Calzolari's, Museum Calceolarium
Cabinets of curiosities were designed to display collections belonging to individuals. Francesco Calzolari's cabinet exhibited his natural history collection.



The Louvre Museum
The Louvre has been reorganized several times, most recently by IM Pei with Gresham Smith Partners.



Palaces

While many royal palaces and historic houses have become publicly visited artifacts themselves, they have also frequently been converted into museums and art galleries. The Louvre Museum in Paris was originally built in the late twelfth century as a fortress, was then transformed into a palace for Charles V, and has been updated several times since. Early versions of the Louvre were akin to large warehouses, cramming as much into the space as possible. Even now, paintings in the larger, taller halls are stacked three high on top of each other. A recent renovation of the Louvre was mandated to, among other things, help reorganize reflection in a way that would make some historic and linear sense. The Hermitage in St. Petersburg, was built as the winter palace of Peter the Great in the early eighteenth century. With 1,050 rooms, it is now among the largest art museums in the world and can take weeks to appreciate in even a cursory way.

Church museums

For centuries, the Catholic Church had been collecting and bringing back to Rome artifacts, paintings, sculpture, mosaics, and religious icons from around the world. All around the city, storehouses filled with these objects were bursting at the seams. In the late eighteenth century the Church campaigned to create what is now known as The Vatican Museums. The Museums were designed in scale and purpose for specific types of display. There was an obvious interest in showing off objects in ways that elevated their level of grandeur

so that each piece was seen as a great work of art or of great significance, reflecting the power and wealth of the Church. In large part, this was achieved through design, with niches, color, and architectural ornamentation lending the works tremendous impact as well as a sense of place and importance. It was an early example of “design as interpretation” being harnessed to contextualize and enhance the display of objects. The design was meant to interpret, celebrate, reveal, and enlighten.

The Capitoline Museum

The Capitoline Museum in Rome was built around 1734 and features artworks in a type of domestic setting. Arranged in the center of the room as well as the perimeter, these displays are less self-conscious than earlier attempts at similar presentations. The display of artifacts is somewhat random and haphazard, giving space to each object by putting them on pedestals, but certainly not interpreting them in any contextual or symbolic way.

The Capitoline Museum
Objects in this museum are placed on pedestals and arranged in a haphazard way.





Self-portrait of Charles Wilson Peale

This painting shows Peale pulling back the curtain to open up history and culture to a wider audience.

Charles Wilson Peale

Peale is credited with opening one of the first public museums in the US in 1786, which he called The Museum of Rational Entertainment. A model for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, his museum was to be the “nation’s closet” or repository of all things worth saving and studying. Peale was among the first to take the collection out of the governmental, church, or royal gallery and present the museum as a place for collecting, preserving, and displaying culture. Whereas museums began as private venues for organizations and individuals

who had the means to collect objects and display them, in a quite literal sense, Peale pulled back the curtain, exposing culture’s history and treasures and inviting us all in.

Expositions

The exposition was an early stepping stone toward public museums and the idea of display for everyone. Beginning in the nineteenth century, these colossal events were similar to the cabinets of curiosities in that they consisted of found objects from exotic places. They differed, though, in how they also explicitly celebrated broader themes like faith, technology, and, above all, the driving force, spellbinding variety, and jaw-dropping spectacle of human progress. Objects were displayed on a huge scale, exoticism and familiarity vied for attention, and for the first time it was all accessible to the emerging middle and working classes. At the Paris World’s Fair in 1900, large pavilions were purpose-built for specific exhibitions, though there was still the compulsion to present absolutely everything you could get your hands on that was deemed of importance without a thematic storyline orientation. Later, World’s Fairs began to feature government and industry-sponsored pavilions, which were designed to deliver stories and iconography, not just for the display of precious objects. In this way, World’s Fairs were precursors to themed entertainment parks and museums of science and industry.



Left: The Unisphere
Designed by Gilmore D. Clarke. The Unisphere was constructed as an attraction for the 1964/1965 New York World’s Fair.

Below: Wanamaker’s Grand Court
Department stores such as Wanamaker’s were pioneers in retail display design.

Retail department stores

Early department stores, particularly in large cities, were not only purveyors of goods, but were also responsible for major advances in display and design communication. Often, items were displayed in thematic exhibitions without the direct intention of being sold, but rather to sell the store’s overall brand—its power, reach, and sophistication, and of course to induce people to come and see the spectacle in the grand halls of the store. These exhibitions sought to display culture and elevate the store’s brand in the eyes of consumers, through offering a kind of free, social entertainment.



Anatomy

Exhibitions are developed to represent the culture, document the trends, or establish the historical narrative of a certain place and time. Throughout history exhibitions have taken on many forms to support various institutions, ranging from churches to monarchies and cities. This section of the book will explore the nature of contemporary exhibitions and the institutions they support, including museums, corporations, educational facilities, and government entities.

While all exhibitions use the environment to communicate, they diverge in the goals of their narratives. Educational museum exhibitions focus on interpreting a specific subject, theme, or story; while corporate and institutional exhibitions use interpretation as a marketing device or to support a place. Trade shows and showroom displays are the most focused, marketing a specific product or service. These different goals not only reflect in diverging narrative approaches, but also in how much money will be invested, the duration of the design process, the nature of the collaborative effort, and the longevity of the final product.

If there is a common thread among the divergent disciplines it is in the design process itself. Exhibitions may tell different stories in different environments, but they are consistent in the way they require collaborative effort to succeed, their need for a clear narrative approach, and the way they have to balance the needs of creating a space with communicating a message.



Exhibition design for museums

Museum design is a specialized form of exhibition planning that is content-driven, informative, educational, and entertaining. Museum design is also a very varied discipline: exhibitions can be permanent or temporary, the design time frame can range from a few months to two or three years. The designer may coordinate the architecture, interior design, and exhibition design for the whole museum, creating an integrated and seamless design. More commonly, however, the designer will just be involved in designing an exhibition within an existing facility.

The content of museum exhibitions can be timeless and can be in place for decades, so the narrative and the design need to remain valid. This narrative must be accessible to all the various audience types who will visit the museum: children, teens, adults, and the elderly. The design may utilize a combination of static/passive and dynamic/interactive components to provide varying levels of entry points into the story. The exhibition can live in the physical environment, but can also extend into the virtual world via the internet as an educational resource to be used before or after the site visit.

Designing for museums is an activity that necessarily engages with the architecture and interior design of the building which houses the exhibition. In particular, the collaboration between all team members is critical in developing new museums since exhibitions can drive the architecture and interior design into a holistic design scheme. Of course, topic-oriented exhibitions are most commonly designed into existing museums.

Whether working with a space in an existing building or crafting a completely new space from the inside out, the designer scripts the story within the planned or existing traffic patterns. Many exhibitions rely on telling a sequence of events linearly. Explicitly linear storytelling can be different from the traditional art museum exhibition, which might allow visitors to browse or go directly to the piece that specifically interests them. The linear narrative exhibit is directed, as in Washington DC's National Holocaust Museum (see page 194) where visitors venture down a given path as a group at a controlled rate. In this case, the museum was developed from the inside out and the story it tells is permanent and unchanging. Of course, the designer can craft a special exhibition into an existing museum to be similarly experienced, but the designer must keep in mind how it affects existing and adjacent exhibitions. Curators, registrars, education specialists, and funders are often part of the exhibition review process during the various phases of design.

**Mixing Messages:
Graphic Design in
Contemporary Culture,
Cooper-Hewitt National
Design Museum**
Designed and curated by
Ellen Lupton.



History museums

History museums document notable events from the past and answer the question “what happened?” They give us a richer knowledge of culture and offer clues about how society has developed. Numerous exhibitions may occur simultaneously within one museum space and can cover a range of time periods. Within individual exhibitions, narratives are usually based on chronology and topic, which lends well to designing linear paths for visitors.

Historical exhibitions may rely on text, artifacts, and archival images to tell stories. Designers and content developers (sometimes they are the same) must select the right amount of these elements to tell the story successfully and engage visitors from differing age ranges and backgrounds.

Living on the River Han, Gyeonggi Provincial Museum

Designed by Design IGA. Nearly every town or city around the world has a museum dedicated to local history, giving the community a way to both archive its history and welcome visitors. This exhibition presents traditional life on the River Han in Korea. Using simple modular glass cases, the display of objects is given a sense of power and grace.





International Spy Museum
Designed by Gallagher Associates. The International Spy Museum may represent the future of museum exhibitions. Part theme park ride, part education center, and part history museum, the central focus on espionage

can be taken in numerous directions. A for-profit museum that must keep a steady stream of visitors in order to survive, it must always try to remain relevant to new generations of visitors.

Right and above: Pearls, American Museum of Natural History

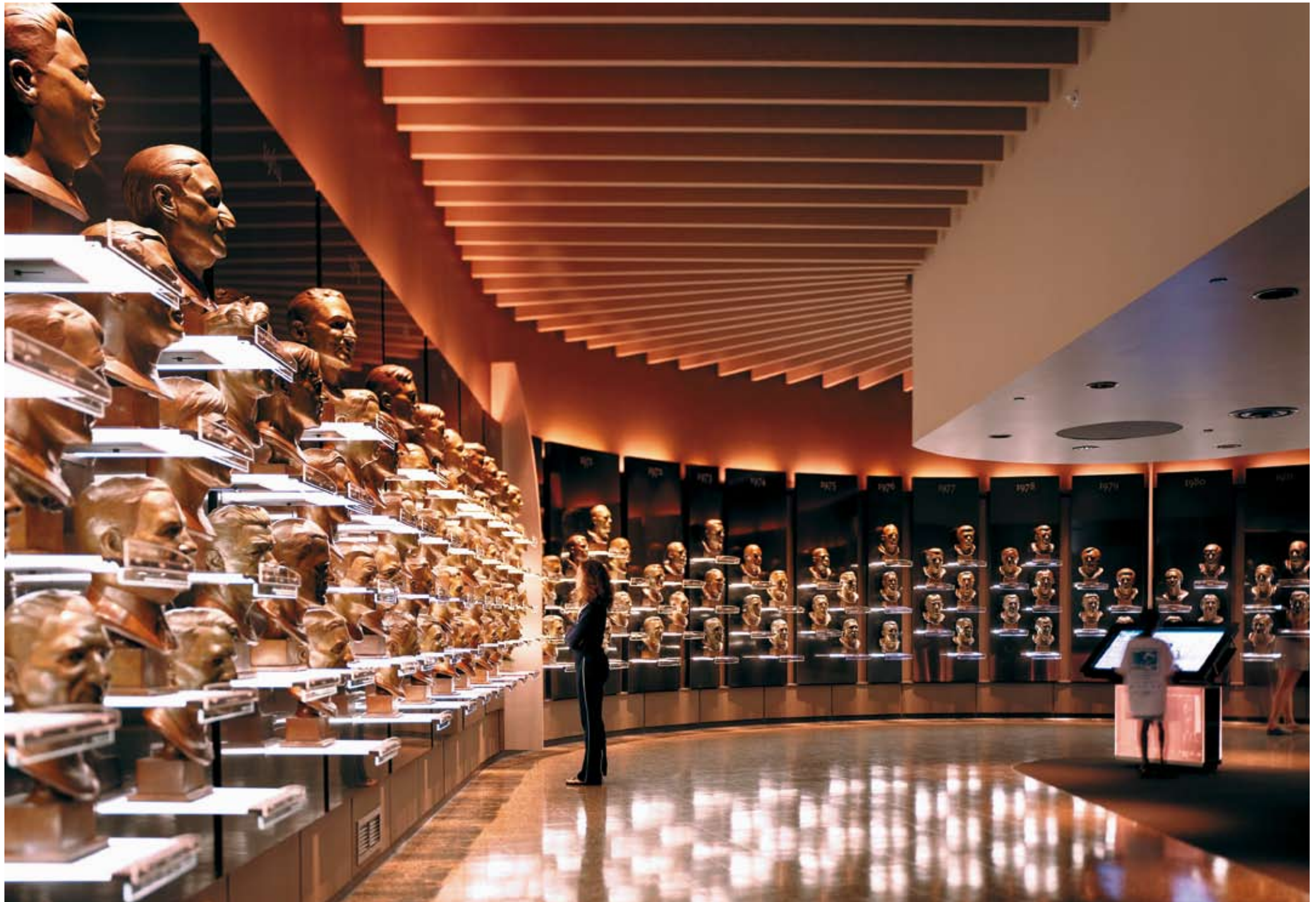
Designed by the American Museum of Natural History's exhibition department. Both a science and a history museum, the American Museum of Natural History has a large in-house exhibition design department skilled in object display as well as media and interior design. Many of their exhibitions integrate object displays with interactive computer kiosks to make a visual connection that is successfully followed up at deeper levels. These exhibitions are excellent examples of the use of multiple levels of display information to captivate visitors. The museum also works with leading design firms like Pentagram and Ralph Appelbaum Associates on their large-scale projects.



Right: Imperial War Museum North

Building by Daniel Libeskind. Architecture by Alistair McCall Real Studios. This museum tells the story of how war has affected the lives of British and Commonwealth citizens since 1914. Constantly moving light is projected against the building and the artifacts inside to create a powerful effect.





Pro Football Hall of Fame

Designed by 4274 Design Workshop. Halls of fame have been increasingly popular in North America since the National Baseball Hall of Fame opened in Cooperstown, New York in 1939. There are now halls of fame that profile sports, teams, themes, and cities. While they are all different in their subjects, they all contain one consistent display element: the story of a single person (the inductee), using a mix of sculpture, object, and text to explain their importance.

Science museums

Science museums help to answer the question, "how?" Science is a living subject and new research and studies are continuously emerging. Science exhibitions are content-driven with topics, at times, up for debate. They provoke thought and raise public awareness. Exhibition design firms must create memorable experiences for visitors and translate scientific content into a form that the general public can easily digest. Trends in design for science museums have moved from passive and

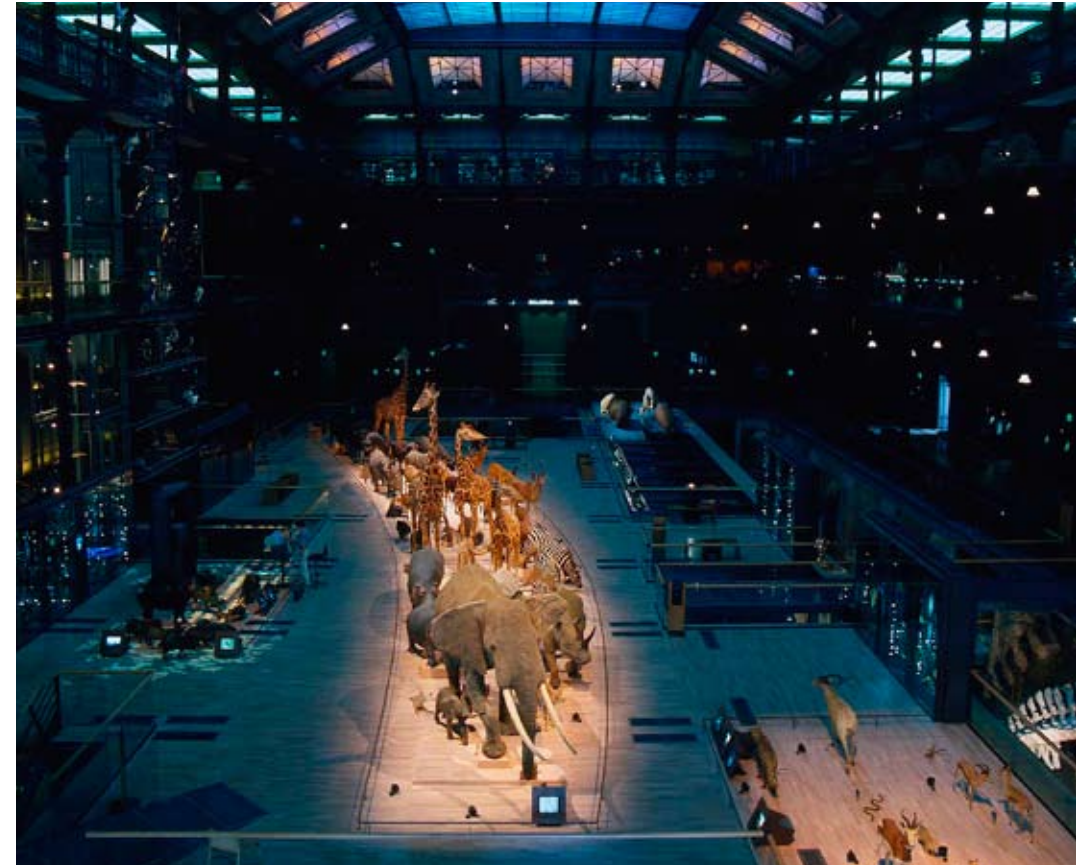
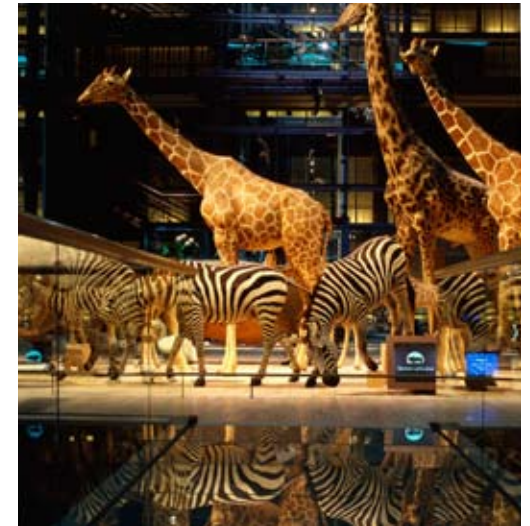
static contemplative displays to dynamic, hands-on experiences. Through interactivity, motion, experimentation, and sensory experiences, visitors learn by doing.

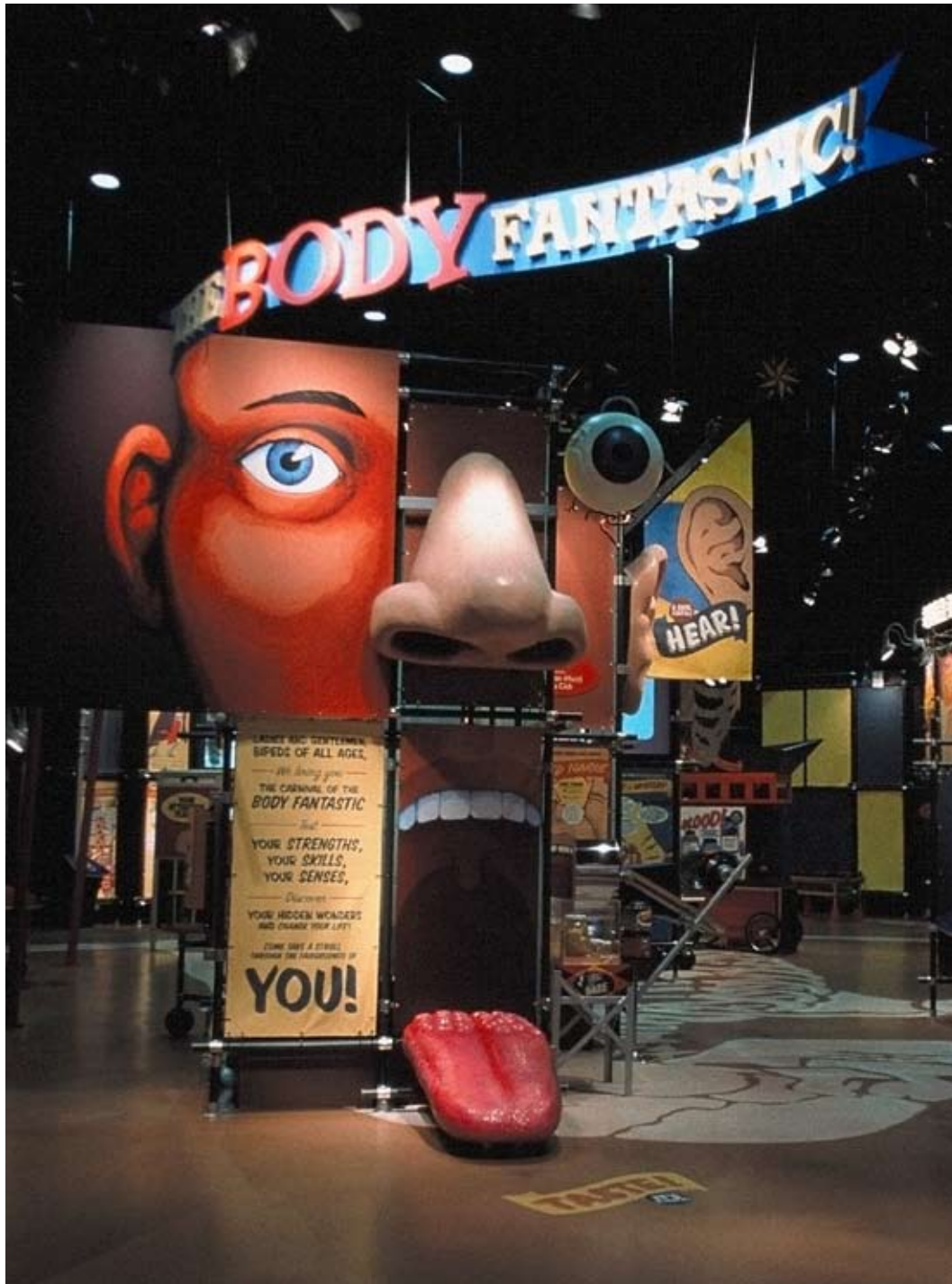
The key is to turn complex information into an accessible and immersive experience. Scientific data is often seen as complicated and dry. Designers can introduce artistic, creative, and appropriately whimsical exhibits in order to break this stereotype.



Grande Galerie de l'évolution, French National Natural History Museum

Designed by Chemetov & Huidobro. Nothing captivates an audience like large-scale elements arranged in an even larger space. This exhibition releases life-size models of animals and allows them to roam the floor, using the displays to divide the space and impart a greater understanding of the differences between animals.





The Body Fantastic, Odysium
 Designed by AldrichPears Associates. This exhibition invites visitors to stroll through a carnival and test their strengths, skills, and senses while learning about the wonders of the human body. Colorful sideshow banners "pitch" basic anatomy and body systems. Games of skill and chance provide opportunities to mimic body processes. The carnival theme provided a graphic approach that appealed to all the target audience groups, but especially the primary audience: teenagers who usually avoid such exhibitions.



Institutional centers

These exhibitions serve as the “front door” to an institution, presenting museum-quality displays that articulate culture and values, and link an organization’s past and present with its vision for the future. They reinforce brand loyalty, but with educational and public service components that go beyond marketing a product.

Institutional centers serve as places of orientation for employees and visitors, and as settings for high-level events. They answer the questions: “Who are we?”

“What do we stand for?” and “What makes us different?” They communicate an ethic, serving as a means to mentor new colleagues, reinforce commitment among employees and customers, and transmit values across the generations. Such exhibitions feel as if they come from the heart of an organization. A prestigious location along with high-quality displays and a color palette that reflects corporate standards all give a sense of respect and stature to an exhibition.

These displays express key messages, but in a warm and understated way. The most effective exhibitions tell the great stories of an organization: the lives and achievements of their founders, how the organization overcame adversity, its contributions to the public good, and where the organization is headed in the future.

A sense of humility and a sense of humor are important to the design of these exhibitions. Some of the most powerful artifacts to display are modest, such as

personal items from the founders or the early sketch of a major product. Perhaps most importantly, these exhibitions are no place for hagiography. Visitors enjoy learning about foibles and faux pas in addition to sterling accomplishments. An institution that can laugh—or at least smile—at itself is a healthy place to work and visit.



The Walter and Leonore Annenberg Science Center
Designed by Hillier Group.
This educational facility opened with an exhibition built in. The design approach was to engage the students on many levels. No matter where students and visitors go in the building, they are surrounded by science, with sculpture, interpretive panels, and diagrams integrated into floors, walls, and spaces.



Donor wall, Baylor College of Medicine
 Designed by Christina Wallach. Donor walls often tell the story of an institution. In this case, glass and light was the medium used to define the institution as a caring "family" within a world community. The Baylor Missions, with their tone of hope and broad scope, are placed within the context of Baylor's history timeline, the Baylor community of philanthropists, and the miraculous changing face of medicine. The effect is a richly textured and fluid "tapestry" of design.



Above: Legacy Gallery, University of Pittsburgh
 Designed by Thoughtform. Utilizing a process of storyboarding with the client, followed by a detailed analysis of prospective users, Thoughtform developed a cylindrical electronic kiosk that matched the architectural detailing of the building interior. The kiosk consisted of a series of touchscreens containing profiles of famous University of Pittsburgh alumni in the worlds of art, medicine, science, and politics. The kiosk also contains an electronic directory of alumni.



Right: Donor wall, Kent State University Academic All-American Athletic Center
 Designed by Amir Khosravi and Jerad Lavey. This low-budget project creates an environment that reflects both outstanding athletic and academic achievements. The exhibition is integrated into the existing interior space and uses subtle graphics.



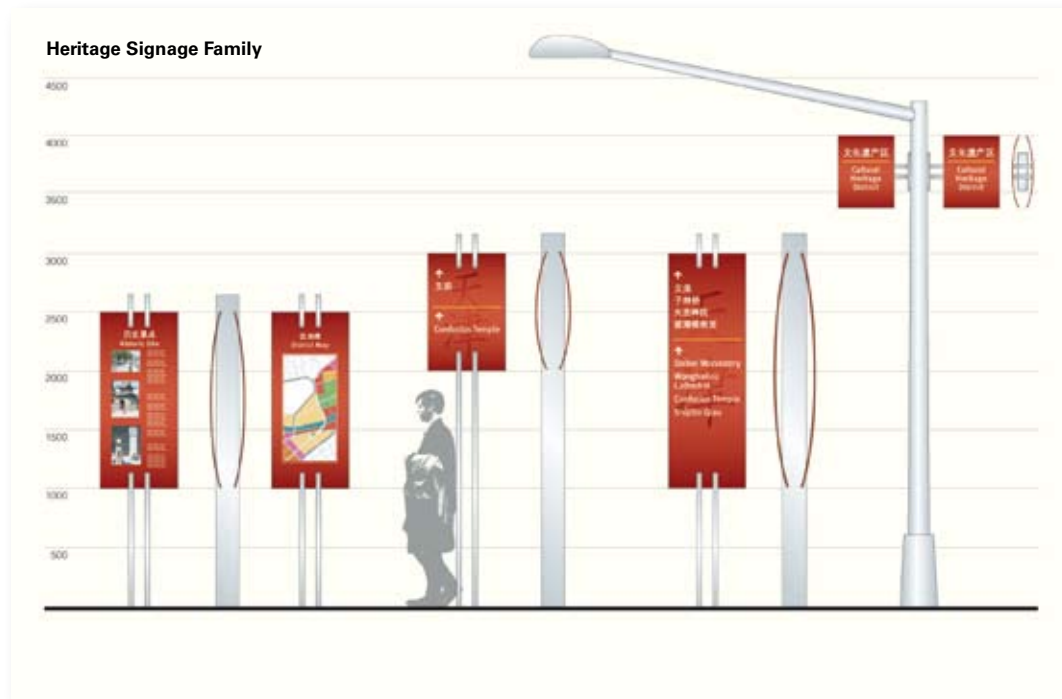
Parks, heritage centers, and botanical gardens

Outdoor environments are among the most difficult to interpret, because the goal is often to create as natural, seamless, and uncontrolled a place as possible. Added to these difficulties is the harshness of outdoor variables, such as weather, animals, sunlight, and pollution. For heritage centers, the difficulty is in interpreting places that may no longer exist or have been substantially altered by modern developments.

Successful exhibitions often tread lightly over the land, employing a multileveled design vocabulary that may take the form of individual objects or be integrated into walls or sidewalks. Signage also plays a significant role in these environments, discreetly assisting with navigating and

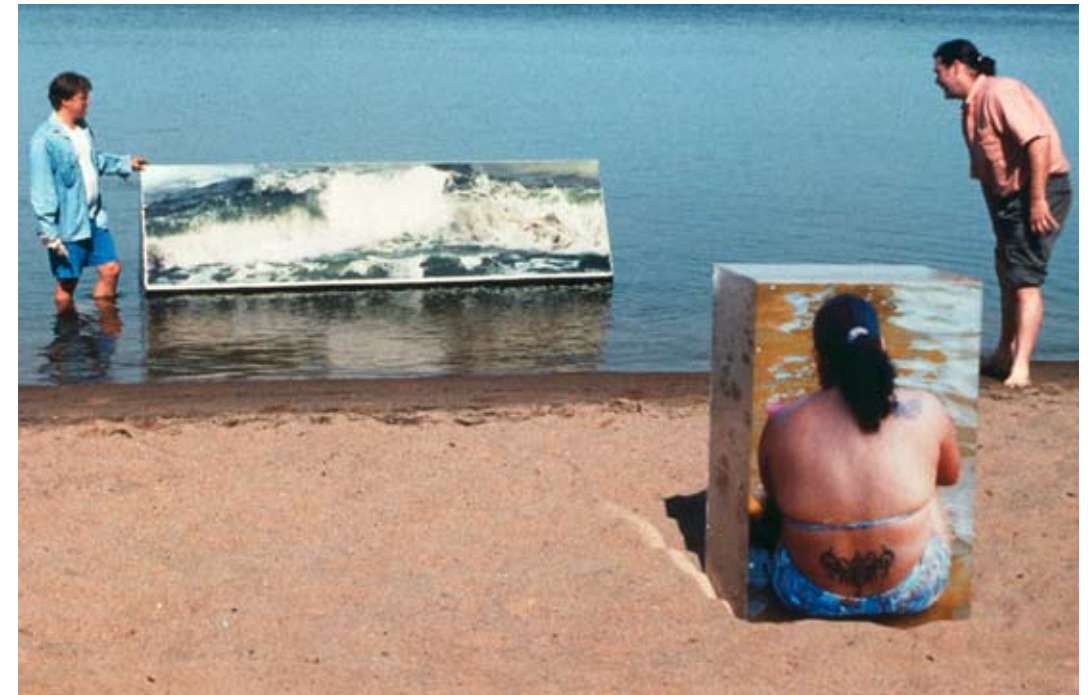
providing a visual map of a place. This need to create a visual picture contrasts with museums and centers where navigation is often along a prescribed path, and the audience are completely focused on a story.

With recent upgrades in communication and information technology, such as cellphones and personal digital assistants, there has been a movement to connect large-scale heritage areas to specific themes with personal and relatable narratives. The physical exhibits in these cases are only a tiny part of the environment and can be integrated into visitor centers, house museums, or even educational and retail facilities.



Opposite page: Tainjin Haihe River sign system
Designed by Calori & Vandenberg. This sign system for the rapidly growing city of Tainjin in China, interprets a city in the process of being developed. By interpreting historic sites along with new buildings, the system can grow and change as needed.

Right and below: Artificial Shrubbery, Luleå International Sculpture Biennale, Nordbatten Museum garden
Designed by Irina Nakhova. This outdoor art installation shows the subtle balance between public art, public space, and interpretive installation.

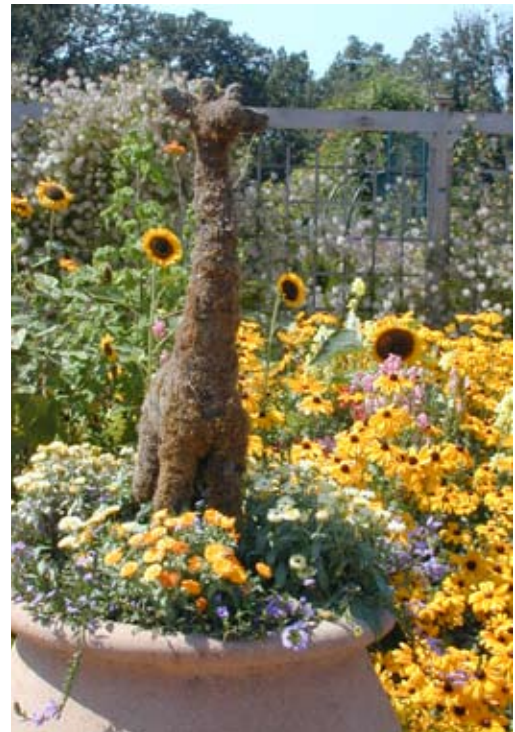


Below and right: Oregon Children's Garden

Designed by Mayer/Reed. This park uses outdoor "rooms" to introduce children to horticulture through public art and hands-on exhibits.

Below right: Embarcadero Promenade

Designed by The Office of Michael Manwaring. These interpretive totems include poems and text on the cultural and natural history of San Francisco. They combine the role of street furniture with storytelling, creating an uncluttered but powerful environment.



Left and top left: The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor

Designed by Selbert Perkins Design. Heritage areas and parks can cover a few acres or hundreds of square miles, but whatever the size, their design development is similar, requiring a large number of distinct but simple pieces to be arranged to tell a story. Color, material, and detail must all be carefully planned to provide consistency over space and time.

Above and top right: Tyler Arboretum

Designed by Cloud Gehshan Associates. This simple interpretive panel provides a great deal of information on the surrounding environment, while also serving as a delicate piece of outdoor furniture.

Exhibition design for trade shows and showrooms

Designing exhibitions to sell products and services has grown into a hugely profitable industry. The level of design sophistication has also grown; trade show and showroom exhibitions have now become as detailed as other forms of exhibitions, to the point of becoming trendsetters for museums and traveling shows. This area of exhibition design has the most cross-fertilization of design professions with architects, event designers, trade show manufacturers, industrial designers, environmental graphic designers, and interior designers all contributing their skills, with the addition of the expertise of marketing strategists and sales representatives.



Trade show booth for Generali, Nationale Carrierebeurs 2006

Designed by TDM, Richard Schipper, and Veenstra Corporate. Italian hospitality, reliability, and tradition with an eye for the times in which we live: these are the topics on which the design of the Generali insurance company's trade fair stand is based. The

red partition walls, on which the original Generali logo of 1831 is shown, combine modern and traditional aspects and place the emphasis on Italian hospitality. The trade fair stand can be put up and taken down at different locations and in different formats and dimensions again and again.



Exhibition design and the environment

Environmental sensitivity is becoming increasingly important to exhibition designers. With the development of institutions like the World Green Building Council and an increase in regulations, all designers are looking for materials and processes that are environmentally sensitive. Environmental sustainability is of the greatest importance to exhibition designers because of the materials they have to work with. The hot and bright lights used in most exhibitions are an enormous energy drain, plus large amounts of energy are involved in moving large-scale exhibitions. The printing and etching of information graphics often uses harmful and difficult-to-dispose of chemicals.

Exhibition designers are using three approaches to achieve sustainability: decreasing energy consumption, using recyclable materials, and decreasing the use of harmful chemicals. Selecting materials and processes may seem easy on the surface, as more and more eco products are available, but this is deceptive. Often the materials that are the most harmful are also the most necessary to the success of the

exhibition, and institutions and designers alike are often loath to sacrifice aesthetics for sustainability.

The key to environmental sustainability is designing for the life span of an exhibition. Degradable materials may work well for a temporary show meant to last only a couple of months in one location, but may not hold up to the rigors of a traveling show or an outdoor exhibition. High-energy lighting is not as large an issue for a small-scale trade show exhibition as it is for an entire museum.

Sustainability strategy works best when it is integrated early into the design process. Many design firms integrate environmental strategy into the storyline of the exhibition, making the sustainable nature of the materials used transparent to the audience. This is most evident in corporate exhibitions and trade shows, where the company's commitment to the environment can be a central storyline. Making sustainability part of the story also makes the balancing act between the environment and durability over time more apparent when key design decisions are being made.

Trade show booth for Prana, traveling exhibition
Designed by Gensler. Prana is an environmentally active company, and this trade show set the tone for a future retail store design by utilizing green building techniques and sustainable materials. The booth needed to use durable materials to withstand repeated set-up and transport to multiple venues. A complete environmental strategy was developed, from the use of compact fluorescent lighting to using hemp rope to create a soft barrier for the exhibition. Nearly the entire exhibition is recyclable, including its metal shipping container.



Pierce County Environmental Services building

Panels designed by AldrichPears Associates. This building incorporates sustainable design elements such as light wells, natural air circulation, and roof water collection. The site, an old gravel mine overlooking Puget Sound, is being reclaimed through a 50-year master plan, which will incorporate a wastewater treatment plant and will replace the mine with recreational facilities and an environmental education center. AldrichPears designed the interpretative panels that explain the Environmental Services' vision and the site's history and geology, as well as issues such as graywater reclamation, landscaping, and erosion control. Visitors are given an inside look into this often unseen world, and take away a sense of personal relevance and responsibility for the environment. By integrating sustainability into this exhibition, the green aspects of the building are made transparent.



Neue Raeme, traveling exhibition
Designed by Stefan Zwicky. One of the leading approaches to creating more sustainable traveling exhibitions is to use lightweight, modular materials. These materials are cheaper

to transport, use less energy in their construction, and are easier to recycle. This design uses fabric and modular steel rods to create a light, but expansive environment.



Storytelling and documentation

Documenting a story in exhibition design offers endless possibilities as well as pitfalls. Since exhibition designers come from so many different professional groups, each with their own approaches and styles, the documentation employed must be accessible to all of these groups, serving as the key communication device throughout the concept development, design development, fabrication, and management process.

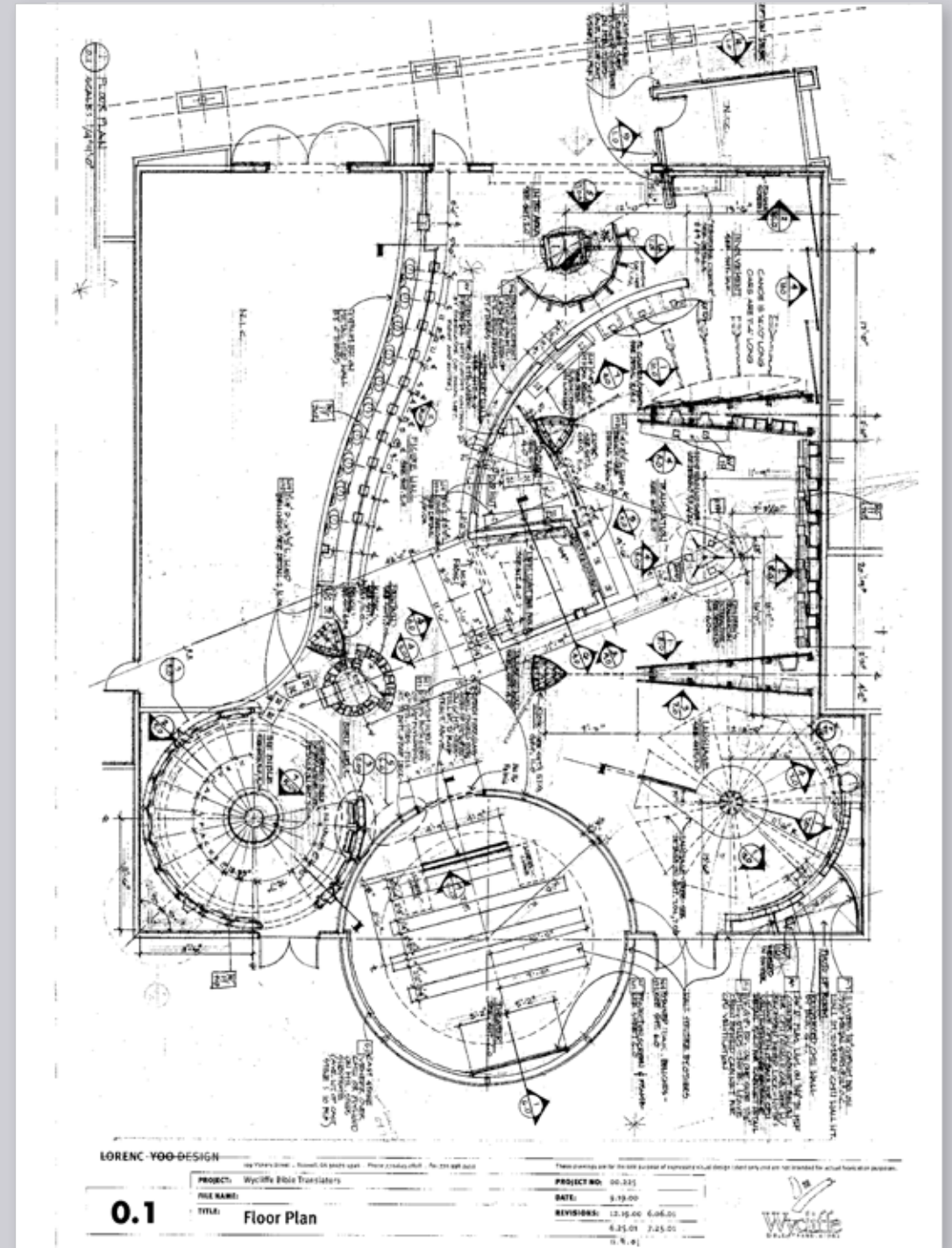
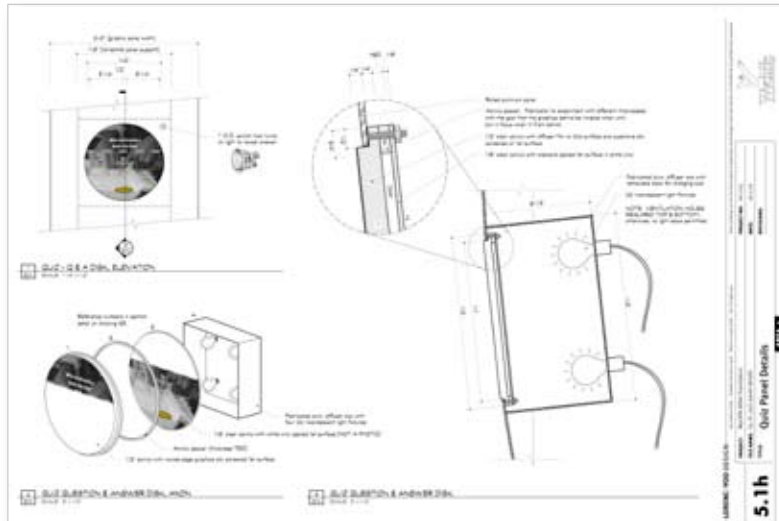
Concept documents

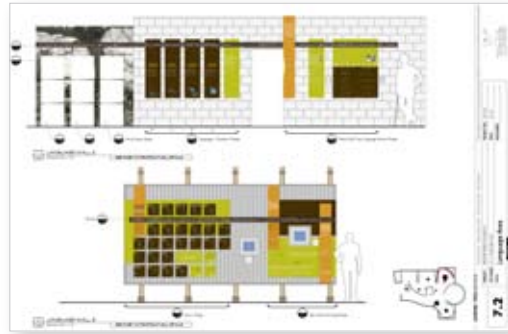
There are as many concept document approaches as there are concepts, from physical and computer models to storyboards and sketches that show how exhibitions are to be navigated and experienced. No matter what the drawing type employed, it is important that drawings made at the conceptual level are produced at the most professional level possible. Concept drawings are often duplicated

widely and used in a variety of ways, including as visuals for stakeholder meetings, as fundraising documents, and as marketing materials. The other important aspect of concept documents is clarity. Since the final exhibition will probably look very different from the concept documents, the central themes and ideas behind the story must remain clear and serve as a guide for the exhibition.

Documentation for WordSpring Discovery Center

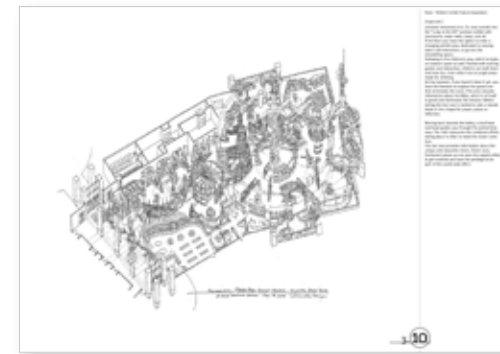
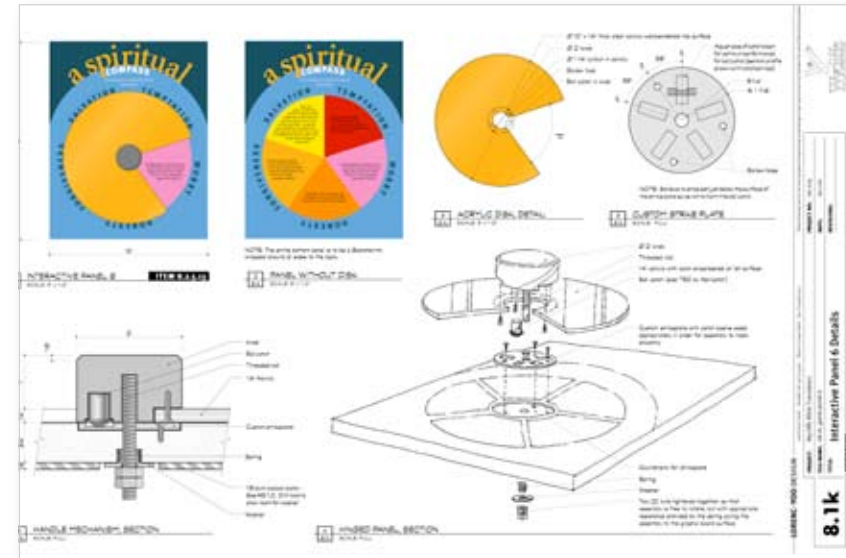
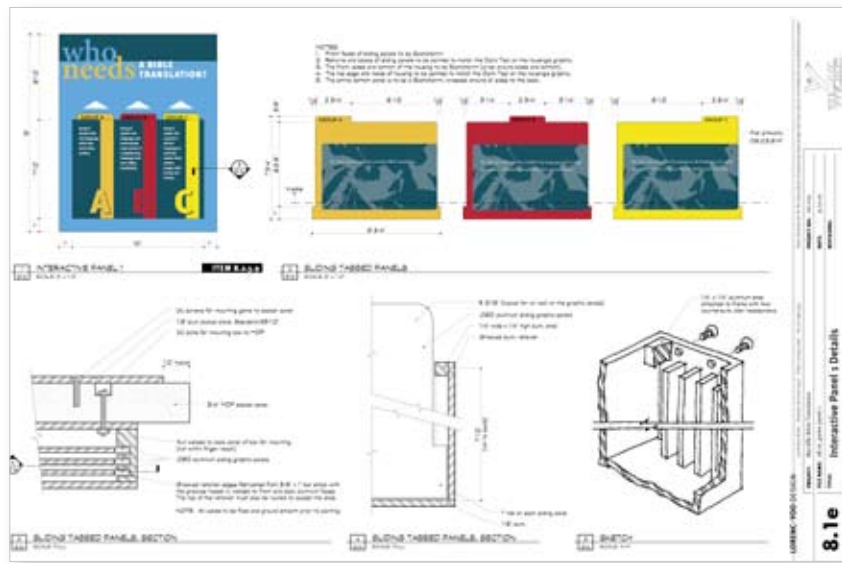
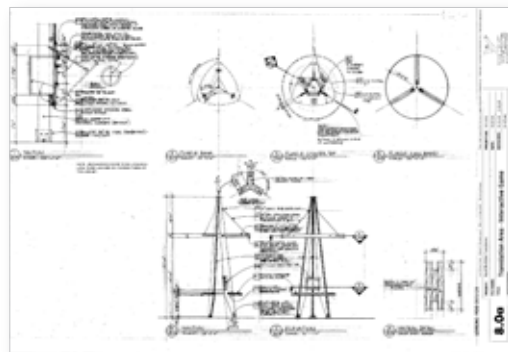
Designed by Lorenc+Yoo. In a single project, designers can use dozens of different documentation approaches starting with storyboards and then proceeding to explore the exhibition in sections and through models, finally ending with shop drawings and prototypes.





Design intent documentation

Design intent documentation is often confused with construction documentation in which every design detail is spelled out through drawings. Since exhibition design can be an exciting collaboration between designers and fabricators, design intent documents are in fact a collaborative communication medium for explaining how a designer would like their exhibition to look to the myriad experts and fabricators involved in the process. Though design intent documents can take on many levels of detail, including text, the two most crucial aspects that must be included are scale and material specification. With an understanding of these two areas, a designer from nearly any field can communicate their vision. The most important skill a designer needs is not documentation knowledge, but confidence in their ability to communicate intent.



Shop drawings, as-builts, prototypes, and photographs

One of the most exciting aspects of documenting an exhibition is working with a fabricator. Since a fabricator's role is to visualize the actual exhibition in the specific way it will be built, they use a number of tools to communicate with the designer and client. Chief among them are shop drawings and as-builts; documents that detail the exhibition elements as closely as possible. Often drawings are not enough to visualize how a display will be put together. In these cases, fabricators may document prototypes of exhibition details. This reliance on fabricator direction may seem like a scary lack of control for many designers, but this is in fact how the best architects and designers worked, including Frank Lloyd Wright and Carlo Scarpa.

Design standards

Upon completion of an exhibition design, a set of documented standards are often needed to ensure that the exhibition is maintained at a high quality. Some exhibitions, such as heritage parks and art exhibitions, have standards that must be administered over long periods of time by many different designers. Trade shows and traveling shows require extensive instructions for erection and dismantling. Documentation of standards is put into a design manual that not only contains the design elements, but also standards for how the story must be told and new additions made. The standards manual represents the culture of the institution and how it sees its identity through exhibition.

