

Assume Vivid Astro Focus

March 01, 2015 through July 01, 2016

ARTIST(S) Assume Vivid Astro Focus

Interview

The CAC lobby is designed to bridge the inside and outside, creating a hybrid between art and experience. How does a semi-public space, outside the conventions of a gallery, effect the conception and design of your work?

We usually approach all our projects in the same way, so working for a semi-public space or an art gallery is more or less the same thing for us. You won't find many differences in the conception and design of our works in either case. However, we are fully aware that, in a semi-public space or a public one, we probably reach out to a wider and broader audience than we would, or could, in the context of an art gallery. And this, of course, is an opportunity that we find both exciting and enchanting.

The difference here usually pertains to the contents of the work being produced for a given space, whether semi-public or private. A private context will allow more freedom, for instance, and less constraints in terms of imagery or security issues. Sometimes we try to play with this, pushing the boundaries of what a public space might expect, and transforming a private space with the same ambitious dynamics and the inclusiveness that a public art project would require.

For our present proposal for CAC, we did not have to compromise much since we knew from the beginning that we wanted to playfully address the austere and angular concrete architecture of the building, so as to soften and "tweak" the first impression of visitors entering the space.

The very scale and configuration of the lobby were significant in our approach to the project, and so was the presence of those huge windows, that gave us a chance to offer something visually striking that could be seen from outside.

What qualities of the building, organization and city influenced your work for the lobby, and what form/s did that reference take?

Since the museum lobby is going through a total make-over, the idea behind our proposal was to relate to this re-construction dynamic somehow, to make visible what could be seen as the inner structure of the building once the walls were removed — be it the electrical cables

system or what could be conceived as the actual “skeleton” structure that keeps the whole building standing. This was the initial idea behind our proposal.

Once we came up with the design of a tube forest, we wanted to be less literal and we started playing with it and we created these rather kaleidoscopic patterns, as if, behind each wall we are covering, an inner colorful and playful tubular intricate system was being activated and revealed. The visitors can therefore explore and actually *feel* the museum’s inner-self energy, as well as its ability to submerge its audience in its core.

Contrary to the outside “palisade” wall, the lobby project is not a direct and obvious reference to Cincinnati. Rather, it refers to and engages the museum’s architecture itself. It is more like a dialogue between the outside and the inside, as if the walls were put inside out.

Art is always a subjective experience, but in an ideal scenario, what do you hope audiences will take away from your work in the new CAC Lobby?

Whether the visitors understand our incentives and goals is not really important, of course: let them enjoy the beautiful shapes and colors and decide for themselves whether the piece needs or deserves interpretation. That being said, covering such a large wall in the lobby and the staircase area, with a particular design and using a wallpaper to do so, is meant as a way to submerge the audience in a visually stimulating and even overwhelming experience. The wallpaper design, a kind of visual virus spreading over and absorbing every given surface, will hopefully allow for a playful relationship to the work, and make the visitors feel as much alive as the museum’s inner walls.