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LIGHTING IN ARCHITECTURE

#147

Cover Story:

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Museum & Cultural Lighting

Light Equity

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Musée Dobrée Nantes, France

As part of a large-scale renovation of the vast museum, **Temeloy** crafted an immersive lighting journey that showcases its treasures through layered light.

The Musée Dobrée is a world-renowned first-class archeology museum located in the Nantes Graslin district of upper Brittany, near to the city's Natural History Museum. The museum was first conceived by Thomas Dobrée in 1810.

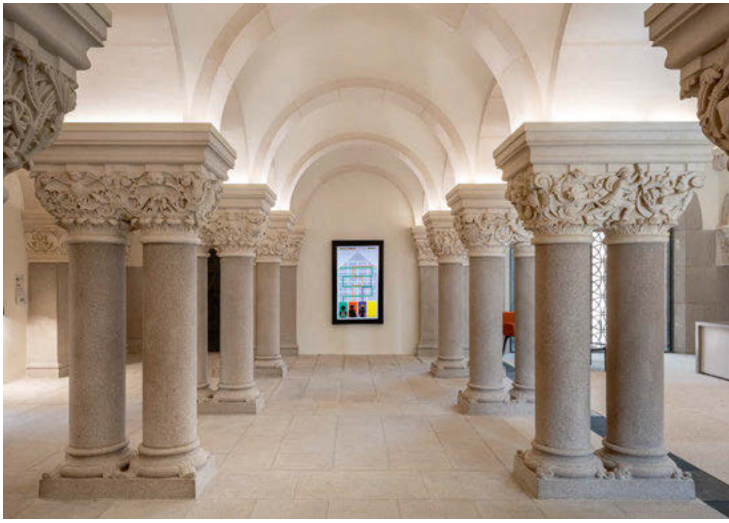
By 1838, Dobrée had collected more than 10,000 works of art including rare books, Breton prints, sculptures, paintings, and decorative art spanning from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. In 1860, he began construction of a 'palace' to house his art collection on the site of a medieval building that had once been a summer residence for the bishops of Nantes. Before Dobrée passed away in 1895, he bequeathed his collection to Conseil General de la Loire-Inferieure. In 1899, the museum that had long been Dobrée's brainchild was finally opened. Today, the Dobrée Musée campus comprises three buildings: the 15th century manor house of John V, Duke of Brittany, known as le manoir; the 19th century Romanesque Revival-style Palais Dobrée (inspired by Viollet-le-Duc and designed by Simon, Boismont, Chenatais, and le Diberder) and a 20th century modern structure completed in 1974. The museum underwent further architectural iterations over a period of 14 years and was closed to the public for restoration from 2017-2024. During this period, the visualisation and development of the reimagined Musée Dobrée lies credit to architect Atelier Novembre, exhibition designer Adeline Rispal, and lighting designer Tiphaine Treins of Temeloy.

Rather than merely illuminating spaces, Temeloy sought to craft an immersive journey that reveals the museum's treasures through carefully

orchestrated layers of light. The three buildings provide differing occupancy and visitor experiences. The temporary exhibits are displayed in Le Manoir, whereas the permanent collection can be experienced in the Palais, while the 20th century building provides a welcoming public point of entry. With this in mind, each of the three buildings required a bespoke and different lighting concept. Temeloy's primary approach enlisted light as a subtle guide, leading visitors through the museum's rich narrative. The warm, intimate illumination echoed the buildings' historical context, while the precisely balanced ambient and accent lighting created depth and dimension. Shadow became an active design element, protecting and preserving sensitive artefacts while adding mystery and drama to the experience.

Multiple light sources worked in harmony to eliminate harsh shadows, while the warm colour temperatures enhanced the natural qualities of the extensive and diverse artworks, including stone, wood, gold, and glass. Through Temeloy's holistic philosophy, light became more than illumination – it became an integral part of the overall museum experience, revealing its collections with both drama and discretion.

In the Palais, many of the rooms feature unique and individualised, highly patterned ceilings designed by Violet Le Duc. From the initial concept, Temeloy identified that the lighting system had to be invisible to the visitor, while at the same time, enhancing the presence of the artworks in the rooms. To achieve the vision, Temeloy suspended an up-and-down aluminium profile from the ceilings,



which followed the decorative patterns with indirect light to create a gentle ambient illumination that filled the space without overwhelming the artworks. This lighting approach softened the boundary between architecture and illumination, bringing to life the historic patterns with a gentle glow. Recessed tracks were installed in the lower part of the profile to house projectors and create accent lighting on the various artworks. To achieve this, a 3D scan of each room was conducted, which then enabled the calculation and design of each profile to ensure that adorning ceiling pattern was meticulously followed. Working closely with formalighting, several design sessions unfolded the unique ambition and requirements of the project. Over the course of two-years, the technologically advanced and innovative engineering processes of formalighting's custom capabilities enabled Temeloy's vision to become a reality, resulting in a grand and inspiring luminaire experience for Musée Dobrée's visitors. Tiphaine Treins of Temeloy says: "It's heartwarming to see that a piece of design can have such an impact. It was also fulfilling to figure out how to work through all the challenges involved in such a sophisticated project, while navigating a complex working relationship with the general contractor, electrical contractor, architect, and manufacturers." Staying with the vision of discreet and concealed illumination, one of the biggest challenges was the museum basement floor. The absence of natural daylight meant that the space was not utilised to its fullest, nor was an inviting environment. To overcome this, Temeloy integrated lighting into a

corniche along the walls to give the space a more cohesive and enveloping feeling, encouraging visitors to engage more deeply with the art on display. The grazing effect of the light on the vault enhanced the volume of the space and helped to guide visitors through the different spaces. Across the seven-year period of concept, design and installation, the penultimate two weeks were where the project became a reality as each intricate piece fell into place. Collectively with the technical team at Musée Dobrée, directed by Claude Renaud, Temeloy invested great amounts of time in perfecting the illumination and effects on the varying paintings to achieve the desired impact. This includes the museum's most recognised artefact, the 'Heart of Ann of Brittany'. The 16th century relic, housed in a gold reliquary, was subtly bathed in three shades of light – revealing its beauty, strength, and presence. Zero reflective black paint was utilised to remove the risk of reflections in collaboration with the discreetly hidden lighting. An object as historic and grand as this has a spirit of its own, allowing it to cross centuries like guardians of the past, and as such deserved the meticulous and conscientious lighting design that Temeloy applied. Temeloy's interior design philosophy was centred on creating a dialogue between light and history. Rather than merely illuminating the spaces, the designers sought to craft an immersive journey that revealed the museum's treasures through carefully orchestrated layers of light leading visitors through the museum's rich narrative.

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Client: Musée Dobrée
Lighting Design: Tiphaine Treins; Temeloy, France
Architect: Atelier Novembre, France
Exhibition Design: Ateliers Adeline Rispal, France
Lighting Specified: Erco, formalighting, iGuzzini, Vivalyte
Photography: Luc Boegly