

History At Your Fingertips

Scharff Weisberg built and installed an A/V system to support the creative multimedia content at The National Museum of the American Indian's "Beauty, Honor and Tradition: The Legacy of Plains Indian Shirts" exhibit. The exhibition is presented in collaboration with the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts.

Featuring 49 visually stunning and spiritually powerful Plains Indian shirts from the National Museum of the American Indian's collections, the exhibit explores the history, iconography, construction and materials of Plains Indian Shirts from the 19th and 20th centuries. The shirts served many purposes beyond their obvious use as clothing including honorary gifts, adornments and the depiction of important events.

There are several important multimedia components to the exhibit. Included are five information kiosks (three computer interactive, one video interactive and one which plays continuous video), two areas featuring unique projection setups, and audio throughout the exhibit.

The three interactive computer kiosks can be controlled by the visitor from a touchscreen which guides him/her through a series of still images and short video clips that pertain to the displays in that exhibition area. The video kiosks feature a looping stream with historical and contextual information. One video kiosk is activated by a sound stick; the other streams continuously. The main gallery of the exhibit features video-projected content that contains detailed footage of some of the shirts on display.

In a nearby hallway, other projectors display environmental images from either end of the space directly at each other. Between them hang three cloth-type scrims. On the two outside scrims, the viewer sees the projected image from the projector

closest to it (on both sides of the scrim). On the middle scrim is a combined image from the two projectors. There is audio throughout the exhibit which is primarily composed of ambient elements of nature such as wind, rain, horses and other sounds of the plains.

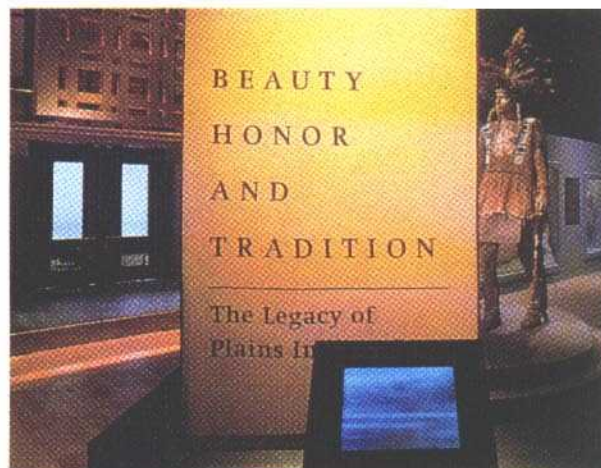
All of the multimedia material is controlled and sourced from A/V racks that Scharff Weisberg installed in the basement of the building. Three kiosks are fed graphics, video and audio content from Macintosh G4 computers. Two Alcorn McBride MP3 audio players provide audio throughout the exhibit hall to 20 JBL speakers and two Cambridge Soundworks Center/Surround III systems. Three Adtec Mirage MPEG-2 players feed two Sony VPL-VW10HT 16:9 video projectors and a Barco BG6300 video projector.

Custom video projector power controllers were designed and built by Scharff Weisberg for the project. "Since the museum requested to have an automated power controller system without the expense of using one of the many off-the-shelf show control products, we took this opportunity to turn to our Custom Service Department's expertise," said Scharff Weisberg project manager, David Girgenti. "The job function if these controllers are simply to tell the projectors to go into standby mode to allow for proper cool down at the end of the day as well as to turn on in the morning, all over RS-232. This eliminates the need for museum staff or security members walking around and manually turn on/off all the projectors with a remote control. Another feature of this device is that it can be programmed wirelessly over infrared control to accommodate scheduled commands."

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