

## EXHIBITOR2008 – Now you see it; now you don't...

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**Illusion of structure through ingenious use of materials, projections and lighting effects add visual interest and flexibility – and with no downside.**

### Part 1 of 3

European exhibitors have known it for years: Build a professionally produced, inviting space with a message that doesn't blind them or blare in their ears, offer comfortable seating in a sheltered nook that inspires confidence and trust, and customers will come in.

Moreover, they'll linger long enough to form the requisite relationship to close a deal – if not right then, then down the road.

It helps to create a sense of exploration and intrigue, to engage curiosity about what's just round the bend, at the end of the game or within the labyrinth – and perhaps to offer a tantalizing hors d'oeuvre or two as well – or a fine cup of coffee or a tempting morsel of chocolate. In short, engage the senses and a sense of play, but also keep it refined. Keep the decibel level down and stick to chic, soothing or minimalist color schemes – perhaps even a monochromatic scheme of white on white or black on black.

This year, it seems almost everyone got the message. **EXHIBITOR2008** reflected lessons exhibitors have been learning at EuroShop and elsewhere overseas.

Case in point: “We wanted to achieve both a European aesthetic and a respite from the crowds,” said Heather Rosenow, vice president of marketing for Derse. “We wanted to make a place for people to relax.”

The booth met both goals; it was such a people magnet that at times it seemed more that the crowd was in the **20x40'** booth (seating capacity was approximately 40) rather than outside it looking for respite within.

But despite that apparent contradiction, the space was indeed the very essence of “pause,” its overarching theme, with a sense of suspension in time and space enhanced by an effective illusion.



At periodic intervals heralded by a shift in lighting to a soft green that gently bathed the interior, screens dropped down on all four sides of the booth, encasing the space – and visitors within – in “the idea of wall” rather than actual walls.

**Descending screens gave images of “Pause” pride of place in the Derse exhibit at EXHIBITOR2008. The booth won “Best of Show, large booth.”**

What had been open and airy space just moments before was now a cocoon in which playful overhead images reigned supreme – for suddenly, there was nothing else in sight. “Our idea was to have descending panels that would fully envelop the space and project an artistic representation of pause – a visual pause,” Rosenow explained.

State-of-the-art theatrical lighting, white riser perimeter seating topped by white cushions, plush white carpeting, and plenty of free sorbet, cool and - again - white, combined to create a sleek, distinctive look. The overall effect was one of charming, unobtrusively intentional simplicity – a look that’s easier to imagine than to achieve. This exhibit did everything right; and its designers were rewarded with EXHIBITOR’s ultimate accolade: Best of Show.

“We started planning in November,” Rosenow said. “The seed idea was to create space for pause.” She explained that color was used in the space only for lighting. “We wanted something monochromatic and unencumbered by structure,” she explained.

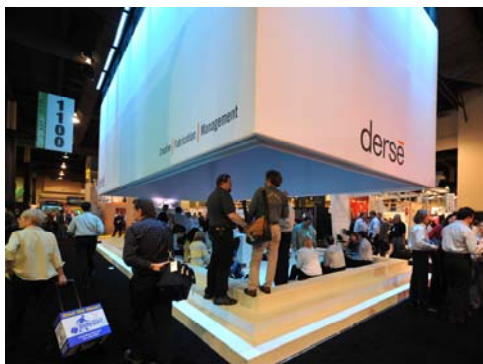
Others had the same idea but took a different approach: black on black rather than white on white, for example.

But the overriding trend this year was openness and liberation from the constraints of structure.

The “non-wall” walls concept popped up all over the show floor in various guises: bare hints of walls achieved with suspended quarter moon or sliver shapes; faux walls, half-walls, transparent or semitransparent boundaries, projections of various types, and even, in one case, closely positioned vertical chains that served as both a key design element and an inexpensive means to mark off space.

In other words, lighting and structure are merging. Why build a wall when you can create the illusion of a wall that’s just as effective and far more versatile?

At the Entertainment Lighting Services (ELS) booth, Michael Friedman explained how such lighting techniques can “make or break a tradeshow exhibit.”



“You can project texture now rather than actually have it,” he said. “And you can also use colored lighting rather than traditional graphics for branding visibility. Projection of patterns can be just as convincing now as actual surface, and it’s more organic and has more design appeal.”

**Attendees were drawn to the white open space of the Derse exhibit, where descending screens and color transformations wrought by lighting transformed the interior into a theater of “Pause.”**

Indeed, show lighting was used effectively within the ELS space to project logos and messaging on the carpet – no printed material needed! – and chain curtains replaced booth walls.

“The illusion of wall works just as well,” Friedman said, “and the open facets of two sides mix the appearance of substance with a broad expanse of open access.”

Close up, the illusion was convincing, creating an inviting space within, but from across the aisle the booth walls seemed to dissolve, providing views of the Derse booth behind. (See photo on page B10)

The “see-through” effect was striking. “The Dazian chain used for the walls is remarkably lightweight; it will fold into a bag to take home,” Friedman said. “And notice that it has a light-reflective coating. We supply Dazian chain to our clients to achieve overall lighting effects.”

Will such features eventually replace traditional elements? Be sure to read Parts 2 and 3 in coming issues. □

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