

cubes

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THINKING OUT OF THE BOX



the luxury issue

HANDLE WITH CARE

IN THE CUBE → INdoors



loft in space

Architecture, technology and art form the basis of Arts Corporation and this is reflected as much in their New York headquarters.

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The Arts Corporation loft in Brooklyn, New York is home of Arts Corporation, the multimedia design laboratory founded by Mike Latham in 2000, an architect from Palm Beach. The creation of sculpture is the root of the firm's architecture and interior design practice. Arts Corporation employs between five to fifteen consultants involved in this, and the multitude of related, ancillary disciplines including programming, branding, product and graphic design, and film and photography. The studio serves as a nexus for the creative efforts of these individuals as well as a home and entertainment space.

Space and Form

The loft is the result of a need to mix programs, designed when Arts Corporation was conceived. More consultants and employees began working in the space, increasing the need for privacy between these functions as well as flexibility— dinner parties with important clients and busy office desks had to coalesce. Conversely, when working on important, large sculptures for gallery shows, more space was needed to assemble the projects. Non-static solutions were needed and this led to all the walls and rooms being moveable. In designing the loft, form is function. 'The form of an object only comes from its fulfillment of its functional purpose. You will find that the resulting aesthetic is not minimalism, which is actually quite a bit more concerned with form than functionalism,' explains Mike. As one would expect, the space is ever-changing. The team has configurations which work best for day to day work, as well as special functions. 'I cannot downplay the importance and joy of being able to move anything at any time, an inch or so, or, as we do very often, at least once a week, clear out the entire studio for a photo or film shoot.' The loft is however, most definitely complete. Movement is simply one function of its completed state.

The vitrines, allowing for excellent customizability as studio, meeting and living spaces were designed exclusively for the space, making up the wall system. As a big fan of the eclectic, Mike believes that there is nothing more contemporary than the jumble of meaning and knowledge in a room full of objects of every age. The bedroom is his favourite area - in its usual state surrounded by a twelve foot white wall behind and to the right, two large windows about twenty feet with a view of the Williamsburg Bridge and a full wall of vitrines to the left containing clothes in their respective colors.

Moods and materials

On the subject of particular effects to moods and materials, Mike states that colour is always used rather than chosen. 'The world is full of so many colorful things the colors of which we generally



ABOVE
Defined by their contents,
Vitrines combine to form
walls. They activate in
specific ways the
voided space which
surrounds them.

OPPOSITE PAGE
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
Like the vitrine, CUBE
is fully mobile.
A bedroom, with Arts
Corporation bed.
The TV Table uses a
mechanical jacks to
change from side table to
dining table height. The
television and VCR can be
pivoted forward as well
for standard viewing
angles.

do not choose, but instead make efforts to hide. I employ transparency to bring out the color of these objects—for example, my clothing or books inside a glass vitrine. The result is that although I do not consciously choose colors as a decorator might do, I often end up with a space a great deal more colorful. But for walls, white, always. Concrete because the building is made of concrete, but also because it has a nice way of receding in to the background with its shiny gray. Glass because of its transparency, I associate this with a certain level of material intelligence. Concrete and glass are both basically made of the same thing—sand subjected to different chemical or heat processes.’ The vitrines, while light structured and made of glass, ‘weigh a ton when full.’ Intended for mobility and defined by their contents, they are not designed as a modular product but can be disassembled and reassembled in a short time. Another main design element, the CUBE, brings even more multi-functionality by providing for a guest room, light fixture and extra storage. ‘The CUBE is an early research into modularity. Its primary functions are light, storage, and sleep. Its aesthetic is very much a modern day interpretation of a

lot of the 1970’s American conceptual artists such as Donald Judd, and Gordon Matta-Clark.’

Multi-functionality

With nothing touching the floor and there being only four corners in the whole area, maintenance is low and cleaning is easy, in fact the concrete floor can be easily hosed down. The glass vitrines, with its individual light fixtures, do well in managing light distribution throughout the studio. The building in which the loft sits is vast - 100,000 ft² on a floor plate. The depth enables natural light to sometimes flow up to 70 ft away from a window. ‘The glass allows light to penetrate all the way into the space. Along the same lines, this is why the guest room (CUBE), for example, is designed as a lighting fixture as well,’ he says. The project can and has worked for multiple living, but depends entirely on the relationship of the inhabitants to each other and to design.

Architecture, Technology, Art

Arts Corporation has combined architecture, technology and art successfully and all of their work exists on a continuum.





RIGHT
One side of CUBE remains open for access; the box can be completed with any existing stationary wall.

BELOW
A vitrine serves as kitchen storage and defines the kitchen space.

OPPOSITE PAGE
Like everything in the loft, this area is multifunctional and can be used for dining, meetings or work.



"Sometimes the easiest way to look at it is in terms of scale. It is all concerned with a core set of values—functionality, transparency both didactic and literal, movement, etc. I feel that, depending on which scale of the work one considers, this work blurs the boundaries between these disciplines thoroughly enough that it is impossible to label the work as interior, architecture, sculpture or art, and in a way this is the goal of the firm and I consider the project to be a great success in those terms. When designing for ourselves, we figure out what the performative function of the object is to be. Then we eliminate everything extraneous, and create the most compact, functional object possible with the technology available to us. When designing for a client, we take a similar approach. We interview the client and carefully document the client's needs and what is to go into a space in terms of objects, furniture, and systems, whether an office, loft, house, restaurant, or other. We then intervene in the most minimal and economical way possible to solve the design question at hand. The greater the requirements in terms of budgets, technology, furniture, people, and function, the greater the intervention. We delight, however, in making simple solutions of complex problems, and I feel that this is the basis of the every day dialogue in the office: What can be eliminated, how can this be made easier?" Mike believes that as the world becomes more urban, such living configurations will be accepted elsewhere, even at the most economically influential levels of society. The future will be about customisation, and as technology in other fields catches up with building, consumers will become more sophisticated and demand space that is flexible and responds to their needs individually, not only in terms of color, finish, furniture, and layout, but on an everyday basis. □

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