A historic location in central Paris dedicated to the creative fields of digital art.

Photos Vincent Fillon, Jean Hartexcalde and Philippe Ruault
In 2001 a decision was made to renovate the historic Théâtre de la Gaîté lyrique, a Parisian theatre that dates back to 1862. The magnificent building was to be revealed in its new guise as a cultural centre dedicated to digital arts and contemporary music. The project, led by Manuelle Gautrand, aimed to create a venue open to all the different artistic fields related to digital art.

To enable all the architectural and programming needs to take shape, the design process began by focusing on the acoustic aspects. The result was a very effective sound-insulation system in relationship with the building’s environment, made up of over 100 units more or less sharing the building’s volume. The project is conceived according to the ‘box within a box’ principle, like Russian dolls, which gradually insulate the different spaces, down to the three most sound-oriented spaces at its core. Three successive layers of wrapping overlap to create increasingly powerful soundproofing as the visitor moves towards the centre of the building, where the three major presentation spaces are located, each of which can be adapted, in different proportions, to any kind of sound design, visual projection or staging.

In addition, there are the building’s ‘breathing spaces’, which consist of more flexible aspects like the foyer, exhibition areas, the café, the resource centre, the video arcade and the spaces devoted to the artists. Throughout these aspects are small pieces of furniture grouped together in clusters to form seating areas, welcome stands, a few bars, and so forth. These are dotted around the public spaces like escorts and, dressed in translucent resin, they offer small luminous additions to the different spaces. Their dodecahedron shapes allow for many cluster formations. Set against the backdrop of the historic décor, they create an element of resonance with contemporary design.

Programmatic and architectural challenges faced the design team while ensuring the best possible use of the space.

Some rooms are padded to allow for acoustic and illuminative works of art.

There is increasingly powerful soundproofing towards the centre of the building.
THE PROJECT IS CONCEIVED ACCORDING TO THE ‘BOX WITHIN A BOX’ PRINCIPLE, LIKE RUSSIAN DOLLS

Many of the furniture elements used in the interior are fully movable, ensuring a great deal of flexibility in how the space can be used.

Visitors are welcome to relax in the futuristic sound and image modules.

There are 70 small, illuminated white boxes used in a modular format throughout the entire building.