

# L'ÉCOUTEUR

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Laurent Massaloux

 Centre national des arts plastiques

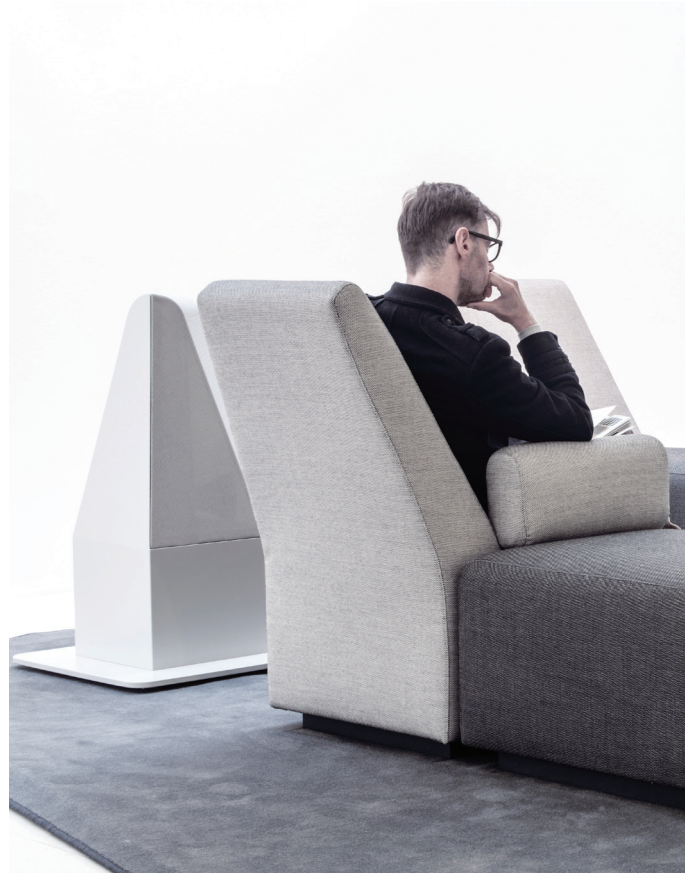


# L'ÉCOUTEUR

*L'Écouteur* (The Listener) is a collective listening installation designed for the diffusion of music and audio material.

A project by curator Jean-Yves Leloup and designer Laurent Massaloux commissioned by the Cnap (Centre national des arts plastiques), *L'Écouteur* was created as a response to the increasingly important role of sound in contemporary arts and exhibition.

It is primarily intended for use by institutions, museums, arts centers, and festivals, as well as by curators and exhibition commissioners working across the fields of contemporary art and sound art. It aims to promote the development and exhibition of sound-based artworks and audio archives.



The design of *L'Écouteur* seeks to translate the temporal experience of listening into spatial terms, encouraging visitors to take a moment to pause or stop as they make their way through the exhibition space. *L'Écouteur* takes into account the new forms of music "consumption" that have developed with the advent of the MP3 player and the playlist, whilst offering a collective and social listening experience.

It functions as a reinterpretation of the traditional music room, at the same time drawing formal inspiration from the calm and neutral space of the recording studio and the sound booth.

The seating units employ a minimal formal vocabulary of prisms, polyhedrons, and pyramids of the kind used to limit echo and reverberation in acoustic measurement and recording spaces.

For designer Laurent Massaloux, it is the French adjective 'mat' that perhaps best sums up the project's



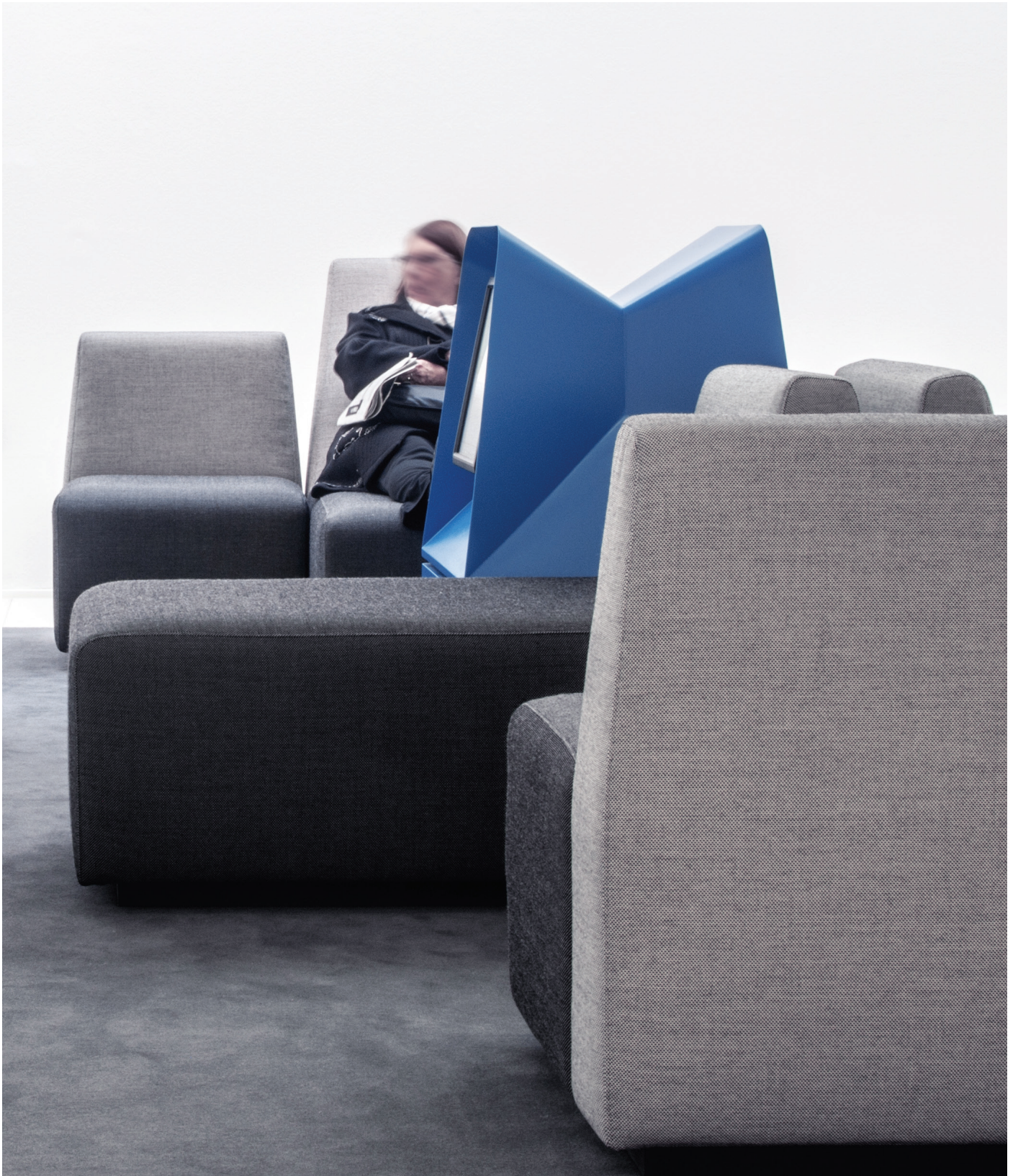
aesthetic: denoting both muted sounds and colors, here the term suggests “an idea of comfort, of peace, of a relaxed atmosphere.” The installation features “an aesthetic of fragmentation, composition, combination” that brings to mind the heterogeneous forms of a varied selection of sound works.

With its multiple volumes, the sonic landscape of *L'Écouteur* lends itself to a range of listening experiences: solitary and meditative, or better still, social and shared.

The design and the layout of the seating units and the speakers breaks with the frontality of the home and the concert hall to offer the visitor an immersive and spatialized listening experience, as well as a greater freedom of movement and interaction.

As in a cinema, the visitor is free to choose their seat. *L'Écouteur* is an invitation to listen actively.





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**L'Écouteur (FNAC 0661-2015) is a public commission by the Centre national des arts plastiques**

**Project :** Jean-Yves Leloup and Laurent Massaloux

**Design :** Laurent Massaloux

**Sound and system design :** Guillaume Pellerin – Parisson

**Construction :** David Topani – Ufacto

**Photos :** Michel Giesbrecht (1,2,4,7) Laurent Massaloux (3,5,6)

## **Spatial specifications:**

- 30 M2 overall: the carpet measures 5 x 6 meters.
- Minimum (and optimum) room dimensions: 65m2.
- Maximum capacity: 15 visitors, seated. Possibility for three visitors to recline.

## **Public functions:**

- The four speakers, wired in stereo, have been designed to provide an exceptionally high sound quality. Each speaker includes a coaxial medium-tweeter and an original, patented vent (nozzle) that preserves the quality of the sound spectrum.
- Visitors can access information about the sound works via two screens that act as dynamic, interactive wall texts.
- In order to avoid sound contamination to the rest of the exhibition space, the installation is equipped with an infrared detection system. Volume drops to a low level when the installation is not in use; when a visitor approaches

or crosses the installation's perimeter, sound levels are automatically raised.

## **Curator functions :**

- The computer system affords the curator a great deal of freedom and makes it easy to set up and modify both the on-screen information and the hours of operation. The graphic interface has been designed to be used from both computers and smartphones.
- Sound works are stored digitally as audio files on a computer/server built into the centre of the installation, inside a unit that also houses two LCD screens. The installation is compatible with all types of audio file.
- Independent operating: sound will be automatically diffused when the installation starts up; start up can be programmed to coincide with the opening times of the exhibition space. A hatch allows for easy access to the computer equipment, which is housed on racks inside the central unit.
- Assembly and transport: schedule for a half a day. Thirty units to be assembled. Transport cases for individual units are provided where necessary.