

PROFILE

Name: Refik Anadol
Media Artist & Director
Location: Installations
Worldwide
Website: refikanadol.com/works/infinity-room

CHALLENGE

Use multiple high-lumen laser projectors to express the artist's vision and experiential design in a variety of public art installations.

SOLUTION

Epson Pro L-Series laser projectors deliver both quality and consistency to support the intersection of an artist's vision and sophisticated projection mapping technology.

Infinity in a 12-foot Cube

Artist Refik Anadol and His Collaboration with Epson

Where does innovation come from? Where do leading technology providers get ideas for new products?

For Epson, an important source is the visual artists they sponsor and collaborate with. One of the best is Refik Anadol, who literally paints with the light of Epson Pro L laser projectors.

"We want to collaborate with visual artists who, like Refik, are really pushing the envelope, because it gives us insights into the next generation of technology," says Gavin Downey, senior product manager, large venue projectors, for Epson.

The company has been partnering with Anadol since 2016, when they collaborated on his Infinity Room to be featured in the Epson booth at InfoComm in June of that year. Epson has provided equipment and expertise for Anadol's other Infinity Room projects as well, including installations of the Infinity Room at South by Southwest in Austin, Texas and Frankfurt, Germany, an installation in the "Light" exhibit at KANEKO in Omaha, Nebraska, and most recently in a new exhibit at the San Francisco Exploratorium.

"It's very similar to what the church was doing in the Renaissance —providing beautiful spaces for artists to work in and the best paint and brushes in the world at that time," Anadol explains. "The idea of helping visionary artists is a beautiful thing...and of course the very complex thinking methodology [needed in my



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work] would not be possible without the support of technology companies like Epson and the visionary minds that are behind them."

Looking into Infinity in Omaha

The Infinity Room is a sophisticated work of art, although the concept behind it seems simple: a 12 x 12 x 12-foot room that viewers step into, lined by mirrors on all four walls, the floor and ceiling, even the inside of the entrance and exit doors. Onto these surfaces are projected a moving array of geometrical patterns in black and white.

"What's most magical about these projectors is that they completely disappear"

—MICHAEL HOLLINS, CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER, KANEKO

“We took these lines and applied some noise algorithms, with the idea of them melting,” Anadol says. “We asked, what happens if there is no corner? What happens if there is no floor, no ceiling, no gravity?...And we suspend the feeling of a specific time...Kind of a dreamy feeling, because the visuals are synced to music.”



It's important to note that Anadol creates artwork for public spaces, for people to see and experience at little or no cost. He began his career in Europe, one of the first artists there to experiment with projection mapping, creating artwork at night on the exteriors of buildings.

He moved on to UCLA as a graduate student, where he began to work with much more complex concepts. “I decided to use data as a substance, and light and art as a canvas, and try to combine media arts and architecture together to create a new meaning for public space.”

“The idea [of the Infinity Room] was always to make people think differently for at least a couple of minutes,” he says. “It’s about a common sense of perception...Yet it wasn’t about virtual reality, it was about physically being there, about opening a door, literally, like every day.”

Michael Hollins, chief creative officer for KANEKO, says that “We had been working on this installation for well over a year, and had seen many images, videos and mockups, but nothing really prepared us for the first time we stepped into the room, when the total immersion took hold. It’s a complete sensorial experience that just takes over your entire being and transports you out of your body to this magical place that the artist created for you.”

“The Infinity Room just opens your mind up to so many different things that could be, if you just think about creativity a little differently,” adds Chris Hochstetler, KANEKO’s executive director.

Reaching People Around the World

Anadol says the inspiration for the Infinity Room came from a book by Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception*. In one chapter, Huxley quotes the poet William Blake: “If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.”

While he conceived the Infinity Room at UCLA, he says it was too complex to build as a student project. He did manage to fund a “very humble” version of the room for the Zorlu Center of Performing Arts in his hometown of Istanbul, in 2015. Then he teamed up with Epson to build the more fully-realized version set up in Las Vegas, Austin, Frankfurt, and Omaha. These five

installations have proved so enticing that over a quarter of a million people have stepped through their doors.

“I think from the very beginning, it was all about empathy. The idea of creating a space that fits in any culture, in any country, any continent,” Anadol says. “The room looks simple, the easiest architecture ever in the world, but actually it’s not. And of course, with Epson’s help, we completely redesigned the room from scratch. We worked with professional builders, used high quality materials...even included ramps so it would be accessible by almost anyone.”

The Epson projectors have helped Anadol in many ways. Each of the Epson-sponsored installations have used four 12,000-lumen Pro L laser projectors, which is an impressive amount of light for such a small space. Anadol notes, “here we have almost 50,000 lumens, and you’re in a magical environment. I think the most important part of the experience is the quality of light.”

One of the problems with most projectors is consistency. The brightness of a traditional projection lamp is not completely predictable, nor is it easy to install four large-venue projectors of exactly the same brightness, even if you outfit them with brand-new lamps. Yet the Pro L-Series, and its laser light source, is remarkably predictable, remarkably consistent.

The Pro L-Series projectors lent themselves to the project in other ways as well. Laser light source projectors are typically lighter than lamp based systems of similar brightness, and thus much easier to mount in a confined space. They produce far less heat. They require little or no maintenance. They are much quieter, too, with minimal fan noise to interfere with the experience of being in the room.

“What’s most magical about these projectors is that they completely disappear,” says Hollins, speaking about the Infinity Room and other installations at KANEKO powered by Epson equipment. “You’re not thinking about the apparatus, you’re not thinking about the technology. It’s more about that living, breathing image, the color, the vision that it portrays. I think that’s the ultimate sign of quality.”

How Technology Can Make Us Better

In his work, Anadol relies more and more heavily on machine intelligence, AI, helping him “use big data as a kind of a pigment.” Yet unlike others who have portrayed machines in a dystopian future, he looks at the positive sides of a changing world.

“Being an optimist means thinking about how technology can make us better,” he explains. “And the answer is in art, because art is the most fundamental way for the human brain to find answers purposefully.”

Downey loves this optimistic vision and is proud of his connection with this extraordinary artist. “The future of Epson’s projection technology is very, very exciting. We are continuing to develop brighter and brighter solutions in smaller and smaller chassis, and we’re really excited to see what visual artists like Refik will continue to do with these projectors.”



credit: Gayle Laird © Exploratorium, www.exploratorium.edu

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