

# MARC TAMSCHICK

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Spatial Media Design



(Cover picture)

**Time Machine**, Helv Relics Museum, Wuxi (CN), 2014

Photo Credits TAMSCHICK MEDIA+SPACE

<https://www.tamschick.com/projekte/time-machine/>

# MARC TAMSCHICK

DESIGN FRIENDS





**Marc Tamschick**

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# The Space Whisperer

Marc Tamschick is the founder and managing director of TAMSCHICK MEDIA+SPACE GmbH. He founded his agency back in 2007 focusing on multimedia scenography, immersive narrative spaces and installations using new technologies. Since its inception the company has won over 30 awards (though he is quick to tell you that awards don't really matter), and become a tight ship managing several creative in-house teams with very specific skillsets. Here he talks to Afsaneh Angelina Rafii about what he is truly after when he makes a space come alive.

**Your passion is the fusion of media and space. You use technology to create a narrative for space. How did this chosen path become your said passion and why do you find it fundamentally relevant for our time?**

During my studies space was always part of my investigation. I was working at the theatre to make some money. In the beginning, there was a logical development to do something for the theatre. It evolved into spaces where media was not expected, for example at a classical music concert.

The first video projection was some time in 1994 which I did for Carmina Burana while I was still a student. From there it grew very naturally from the screen to the walls of spaces or to sculpting spaces with media. This was facilitated through connections that I made with some architects and stage designers. Along the way I discovered something I didn't know before, which was that media can completely alter spaces. It's not only the narration that you can bring into the space, it's also what we call mapping the abilities to transform the dimension for the viewer, to transform scale and to transform time.

Why is it meaningful today? I think it's meaningful in certain contexts only and not in others. Through the use of media, we can add time to spaces and by adding time we can add narration, we can add content and context and depending on that content and context this can be meaningful or completely stupid. This is very different from very classical methods of scenography. Whether it brings some value for society and the public is totally dependent on what we do within each context and the narrative that we are telling.

**But do you feel like you already know which contexts make sense from the onset, or is that something you need to explore on a case by case basis?**

Each project that we have is a complete exploration. We have to discover the real message that has to be delivered to the audience and this is sometimes a very difficult path to explore. It goes through a lot of iterations, trial and error until you find the right thing. It's weird to say that the first idea is often the best idea, it's a process, but through the process this first idea can change. This is where passion comes in, because if you only do it as a job and not with passion you will never find that essence and it costs a lot of energy and input from a lot of people. It's a whole mix of different aspects that make something valuable or not valuable or only half valuable.

**What are the main pillars to creating a narrative for a set space?**

There is a stance you take as to what it is that you want to deliver. In German we call it "Haltung". It's an attitude or a spirit that you have as a creator. How you approach a subject, because

the message is already the condensed result of the attitude. It's how you position yourself towards a subject and what you think is the right way to convey the core essence of the subject to an audience. I think this is the most difficult thing to discover because often I am confronted with topics which I haven't touched before, or I am not keen on, or I am not knowledgeable enough about - so you have to kind of find your way into the subject.

**There is a strong visual and auditive component. Are there technologies that you heavily rely on?**

Technology is not important for me. I come from a classical drawing and animation background. I work with a pencil and a piece of paper and that's how things come to life. It's a very artistic world. Over time I have developed other skills. We also work with huge teams nowadays.

We are always trying to make the technology invisible. I don't want the spectator to be fascinated by the technology that we use but by the emotions and the effect of the little or strong narratives that we put into our spaces. Over time the search on

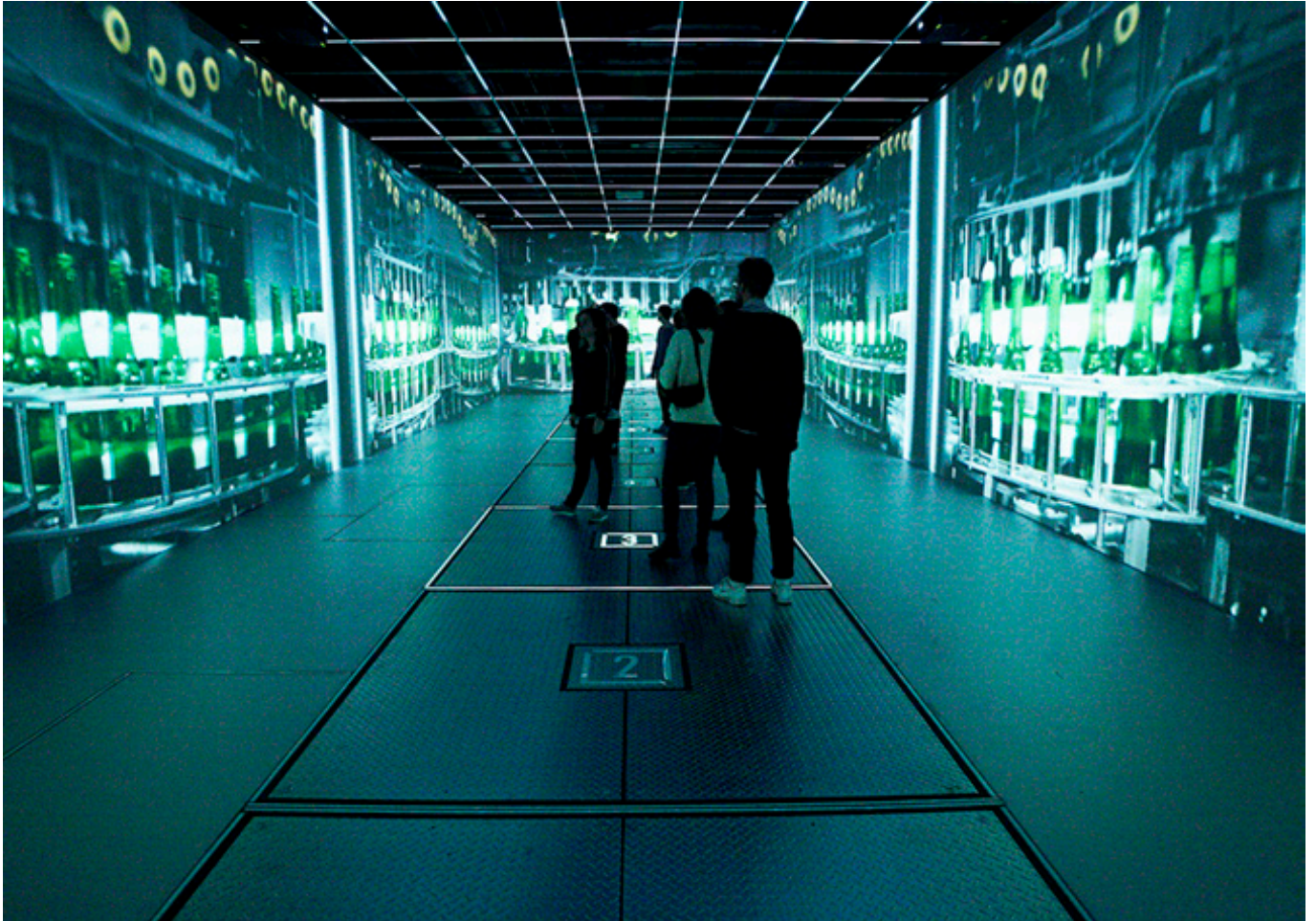
how to narrate in space has had a lot of very different results. I call our projects experiments in narration. The main glue for everything is to manipulate the viewer's perception, sense, emotions through sound, through image, through movement in the given space. But I am not coming at it from a technological perspective. That's not what drives us. It's just something that I discovered over time and it has been interesting but compared to other companies that work in the field we are really coming at it from the classical story-driven animation.

We work more with images that I call "Erinnerungsbilder" - images from your memory. Everyone has similar memories associated with certain emotions and moments. For example, if you hear the sound of waves and just see a little bit of blue colour moving, you see waves, you see the beach. You might see different waves than what I see, and we will probably have different associations to each wave but in a poetic sense we will likely have similar emotions that we can awaken through these images or moments or sounds. This is what we try to explore more than the technology.

**Brew Your Ride – Heineken Experience, Amsterdam (NL), 2018**

Photo Credits TAMSCHICK MEDIA+SPACE

<https://www.tamschick.com/projekte/brew-your-ride/>



**Arabian Journeys, Dhahran (KSA), 2018**

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“These immersive spaces can transfer a certain amount of knowledge. It’s a space where you can get connected with a topic and time, from there you will explore more.”



**The Macallan Brand Experience**, Craigellachie (UK) 2018

Photo Credits Gyorgy Korossy for TAMSCHICK MEDIA+SPACE

<https://www.tamschick.com/projekte/whisky-story/>



**You orchestrate various media instruments such as film, interaction technology, kinetics, 3D animation, motion design and sound in multi-media scenographies. How does that work in reality? Are you able to do everything with your in-house team? Can you walk us through your process of creation?**

We do have a strong in-house team, but every project also involves freelancers and other artists that come from outside the company. The way we approach each project is very different for me and Charlotte (Charlotte Tamschick, Creative Director at Tamschick Media). I am more experimental. I go through the more expensive process of testing and experimenting, using models, projectors, trying out what could be the best possible solution for a given space. And there is also another process where we write a script and then from the script you develop the whole project. These are the two main approaches.

**When you write the script do you also sketch?**

Yes, my approach is entirely a sketchbook approach. I still use

animation software to sketch out my storyboards. Nowadays, everything has become digital so you are drawing on an iPad, the iPad is immediately connected to your 3D software and you can see it in the space.

**Are you and Charlotte the initiators of the ideas?**

It depends. It's always a collaborative process. I am trying to listen. For example, to scientists about what they are doing. I then digest what they tell me and then I come up with proposals and discuss it with them. That's really beautiful to me. When you go into a process that is unknown to you, and together with the experts you develop a vision that can be grasped by the larger public. A lot of our projects are attractors or emotion-generators. They are not narrative in the classical sense. They are also story-telling but they are creating emotions.

**You have been involved in a range of projects, from exhibitions, to international pavilions, what makes you take on a specific project? What are the ingredients that you look for and are you drawn by challenge - especially now in light of the fact**

**that you have won 30+ awards for your projects?**

Awards are not important. They are important at the very beginning - the first two or three. But then it becomes important only for marketing purposes or the initial client approach. I think, yes, there are different ingredients that make a project interesting, but I think the first contact with every project is always the same. I don't know what to do. I have no clue how to approach it and I have to wait for it to click. I don't know how else to describe it. It's a moment where you all of a sudden see the project in front of your eyes and this moment has to happen. Sometimes it's really hard. It can be really frustrating when you are waiting for it to happen. You are sleeping and living with the range of possibilities of what you could do. Everything is just a blank canvas. And then comes the moment where it clicks.

**Is that click purely emotional for you? Or is it intellectual like an "Aha" moment.**

It's both. You suddenly know what the project needs. How it will be. You visualize it in your mind. I don't know why it happens like that. But it's

something that you digest within you. Of course, there are many challenges: how to solve it, how to get it done, how to persuade others to follow your vision. I'm not a dictator. I like to experiment. There is a certain vision and I know what I would like to achieve but don't know how to achieve it from the onset. Through trial and error and with the help and skillset of others and their energy we eventually solve the different levels of difficulties which are inherent in the project. They can be technical, they can be visual, just pure size, etc. The biggest challenge is to have that click when you really believe in a project.

Marketing projects fall outside of that range and I am not so keen on doing them. I like projects where we can implement the full solution from the first idea to the last touch, where we are designing everything from beginning to end.

**What particular experiences do you think could be elevated through the use of immersive media and help solve some of the world's issues, beyond just a cultural or brand experience?**

There are a lot of challenges which we have to deal with today but if I had to

pick one, it would be what and how our kids will deal with information overload and the tools they have in their hands. What can we do to reconnect them with culture, knowledge, education and how can we find ways to make them interested in literature, art, stories, the past, science, technology, and physics in such a way that it can compete with what they have in their hands and pockets? I think using new technologies and immersive media for that is one possibility. We are actually currently working on that: how can we make subjects attractive for this new generation of mobile phone brains. I think this is one of the challenges. This is one that will probably keep us busy for the next decade.

I think these pure "bling-bling-wow" spaces are fun to do sometimes, but in the end, we are really trying to avoid these projects because they are brainless. They are just bubbles to show-off. I am really thinking that immersion has many capabilities which we aren't even fully cognisant of.

As an example, we are now doing one project in the US for the American Museum of Natural History in NYC. It's a project for a museum that is

used to displaying a lot of different layers of science in separate galleries. Science has become a kind of expert field and it's exhibited like that too. So, you go to the museums and you see a hall of bones, a hall of stones, a hall for anthropology, everything is kind of compartmentalized and somehow the magic is gone, and nothing is connected anymore. An immersive space can reconnect all of these into one experience and bring us back as a viewer and reconnect us with nature, and with the science that makes us understand that nature.

**For museum visitors in particular do you think an experience can only be truly educational if the spectator is somehow involved in the experience? Instead of just being a passive observer, the visitors here are invited to take an active part in the museum experience.**

I think it makes a big difference if you involve the spectator in the narrative. It's just very complicated to do it in any kind of space be it a museum, an exhibition, or an expo, because the spectator is not used to getting really involved. Visitors go into a museum to see things. If you are lucky, they also

**Light Cloud**, Darmstadt (DE), 2018

Photo Credits TAMSCHICK MEDIA+SPACE

<https://www.tamschick.com/projekte/light-cloud/>



**Sphinx Hall**, Jungfrauoch, Wengen (CH), 2012

Photo Credits TAMSCHICK MEDIA+SPACE

<https://www.tamschick.com/en/projects/sphinx-hall/>



“Making people believe in a vision can be a challenge. And then there is the challenge of creating what you want within a budget and in time, and with the right team.”



**Magic Box**, State Grid Pavilion, Expo, Shanghai (CN), 2010

Photo Credits Martin Retschitzegger & Roland Halbe for TAMSCHICK MEDIA+SPACE

<https://www.tamschick.com/projekte/magic-box/>





read what is written next to these things and if you are very lucky, they might get interested beyond and want to investigate further. These immersive spaces can transfer a certain amount of knowledge. It's a space where you can get connected with a topic and time, from there you will explore more. At the moment there are a lot of projects happening where you don't feel like there is really a purpose behind what's happening in the space. It's beautiful, with beautiful colours and abstract artworks in motion but nothing more. What we are trying to do in every project is to give that little bit more that will push you into a theme, subject, story or whatever.

**In the particular case of museums, how do you ensure that you are not just creating "noise" or "fluff" and that what you have designed truly brings an added dimension. Is this something you discuss and consider during your briefings? I am asking because I think it can be quite easy to create highly emotional experiences for the spectator with the right mix of sensorial experiences (very visual and auditive), almost manipulating you into a "feeling" and somehow taking shortcuts.**

With the AMNH (American Museum of Natural History) we are working with something like 60-70 scientists who give us feedback and input on how the things that we want to create are displayed in a scientifically correct way. In the end, we will have a liveable experience which is completely rooted in science, and which is done with scientific data. We glue these things together to create a narrative flow of images and of course we will use the typical emotion generators to create a dramaturgy, to create emotions and feelings and hopefully make the visitor reconnect with our existing life on this planet.

I think it's challenging because sometimes we also just create beautiful designs which have no real content. It's an inherent part of this media world we work in.

**Besides the space itself what are some of the constraints or boundaries you need to work around to achieve your goals?**

Probably the biggest constraint is how you can go about conveying your vision. How can you show what you are imagining with your hands, and your voice, and some sketches, and

later some renderings, and make it tangible for people? A lot of the things you are imagining have not been solved before. It's very difficult to show to someone who has no artistic vision, or understanding of this process, something without using references that already exist.

**Are you referring to your clients?**

I am referring to anybody who is involved in the project and who comes from a less imaginative side. A scientist for example has his own world in which he lives and is an expert, but he might not be able to imagine how big a space is. There are very different skillsets for each of us in this world. It's not a critique, it's just a fact that in order to make a vision come alive you have to really drag a lot of people with you and this is I think the biggest challenge. Making people believe in a vision can be a challenge. And then there is the challenge of creating what you want within a budget and in time, and with the right team.

**Further to the idea of challenges, often cultural institutions have to deal with funding and financial constraints. The creations you make give the impression of being highly resource-intensive, how do you work around that?**

It has become like that in recent years. In reality projects which are low budget bring about the same types of challenges, the same types of tasks, etc. It's just either at a bigger scale or at a smaller scale. I love the smaller projects. Often you can say, ok, you only have this amount of money let's do something beautiful and this is what I propose. In bigger projects, you are at some point also faced with the constraints of some kind of contractual and money-driven bullshit which you cannot easily ignore. You just have to live with certain things that you wouldn't accept in a smaller project.

**Is there a certain formula you have developed over the years that transcends the space boundary or the narrative constraints of each client? Something that you know will allow you to expand the physical boundary that you have in front of you and bring the spectator closer to an emotional and lasting experience?**

Yes, of course. But there are two elements to this. One is something which I call "You cannot get a better idea anymore." You are repeating certain things that you have done before and you know they are working, so you will repeat them because you know you can rely on them, it has proven to work. But on the other hand, you are also always trying to find new ideas. As I said when you have this kind of "click" moment, you see the project and you are trying to avoid repeating yourself, but you also use the repertoire of knowledge that was built over the years.

**What would be your dream project?**

My dream project would be a project in which we solve the boundaries between anything driven by science or knowledge and something completely poetic and rooted in fantasy. A project which I call walkable rituals. A series of spaces in which you walk from one space into another and experiment with rituals, with your body, with your mind, things that will make you transform your perception and your view of the world somehow. A kind of reinitialization experience, where you come out and you have stepped

through some of the most important emotions that could motivate you to do something and view things with another perspective.

**Magic Box**, State Grid Pavilion, Expo, Shanghai (CN), 2010

Photo Credits Martin Retschitzegger & Roland Halbe for TAMSCHICK MEDIA+SPACE

<https://www.tamschick.com/projekte/magic-box/>



**The Treasure**, Saudi Arabian Pavilion, Expo, Shanghai (CN), 2010  
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<https://www.tamschick.com/projekte/the-treasure/>



“For example, if you hear the sound of waves and just see a little bit of blue colour moving, you see waves, you see the beach. You might see different waves than what I see, and we will probably have different associations to each wave but in a poetic sense we will likely have similar emotions that we can awaken through these images or moments or sounds.”





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