

PROJECTS

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NATHALIE HARB (/AUTHORS/2144847321-NATHALIE-HARB)
THE SILENT ROOM

London Design Biennale 2018

PHOTOS BY ED REEVE (/AUTHORS/2144742782-ED-REEVE)



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The Silent Room is an urban intervention that proposes public shelters where citizens can freely rest, insulated from the noises of the city and other sensorial aggressions.

“Silence is becoming a commodity for the privileged,” says designer Nathalie Harb. To live in an urban environment is to be subject to a torrent of information and distraction, while public space is disappearing in a relentless wave of privatisation. The Silent Room responds to this context, providing a cocoon-like space isolated from the city’s noise. “It offers the luxury of silence to everyone, regardless of background or status. It redresses the sonic inequity within the contemporary urban landscape.”

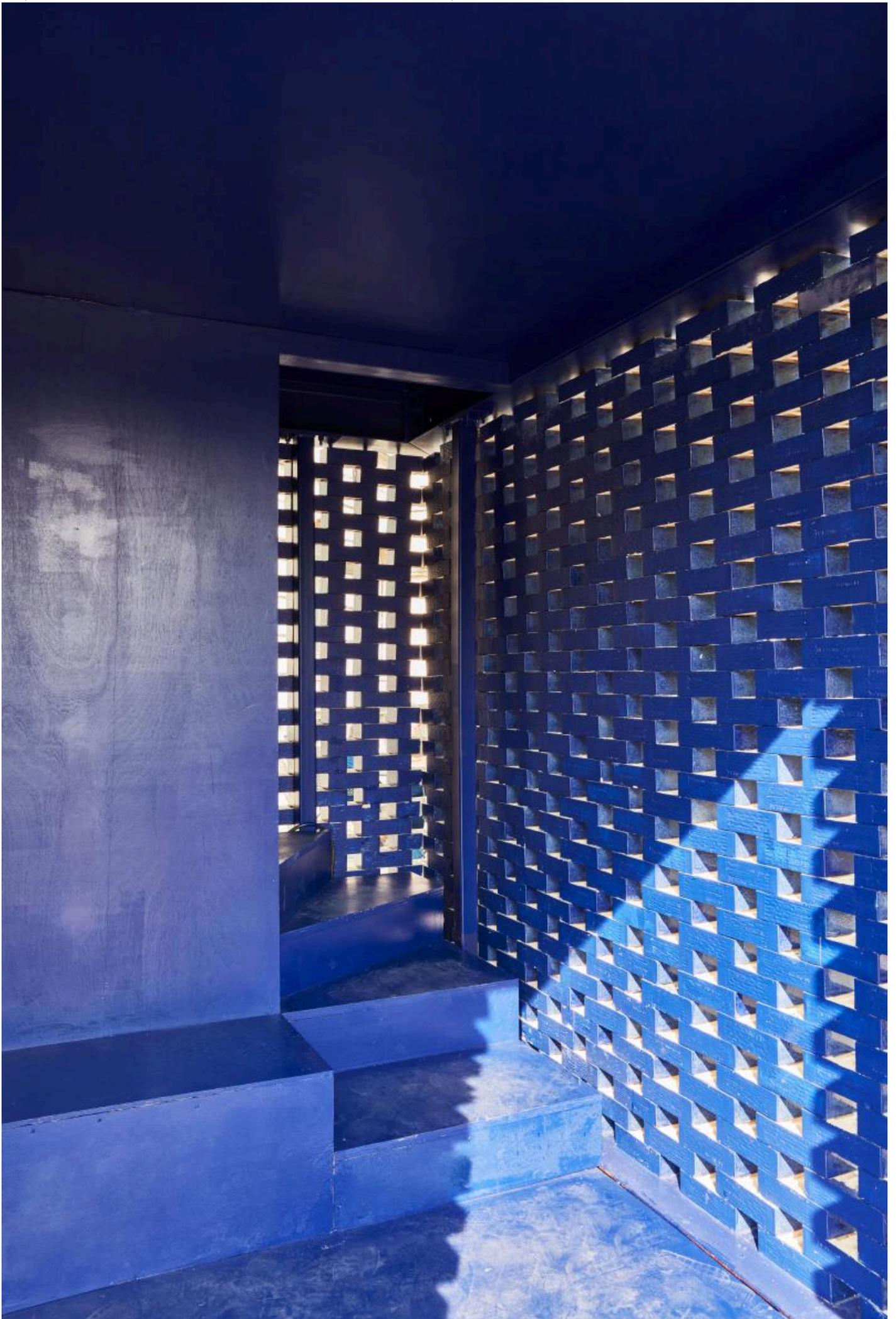


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Visitors enter a perforated brick and timber tower and ascend a staircase to the wooden upper level, which houses the Silent Room. The light inside is very dim, providing the absolute minimum of visual information: “It’s not a space that’s designed to be seen, so much as sensed,” says Nathalie Harb. The walls and floor are lined with fabric, which is also in a very subdued tone. Eight speakers gently broadcast a field recording of the city at its quietest moments. This is all that the visitor will see and hear. “I hope that it’ll give the visitor a different way of thinking about the urban environment, of understanding it in terms of noise and silence, over-stimulation and peace: that you’ll come away from it with an increased awareness of the soundscape around you and its effects.”

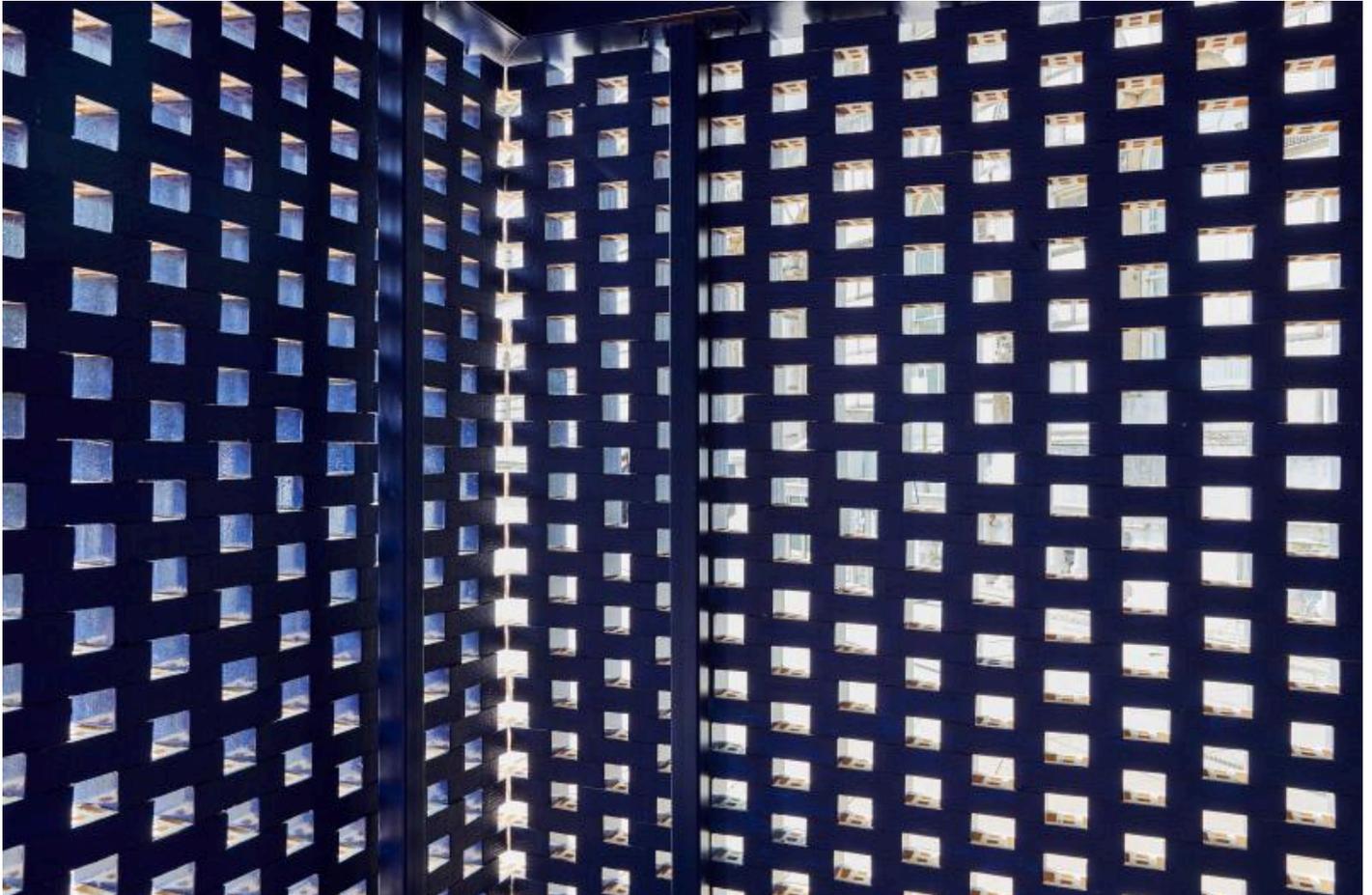


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The Silent Room was inspired by Nathalie Harb's home city of Beirut. "It came out of the very particular soundscape of that city, which is itself a product of the fact that physical space is so limited there. Sounds are very close to you, and short and sharp – it's a hugely saturated environment." The Silent Room, on the other hand, is a place of absence.



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CREDITS

DESIGN