WHO'S AFRAID OF COLOUR?
WHY NEW INTERIORS BRAVE THE BRIGHTS
GAÎTÉ LYRIQUE
BY MANUELLE GAUTRAND

La Gaité Lyrique, one of the oldest theatres in Paris, recently underwent a major renovation at the hands of Manuelle Gautrand Architects. The building’s listed façade, however, gives little clue as to what waits inside: a pulsating buzz and nonstop action in one of the several areas – or ‘breathing spaces’ – that make up this contemporary venue for the arts.

Gautrand, who insisted that visitors be able to ‘find a place of their own amidst all the noise and activity’, introduced multi-purpose mobile units, aptly called éclaireuses, or ‘girl guides’, which have the ability, as the architect points out, to ‘move throughout the open spaces’. Seventy éclaireuses are, in fact, already finding their way around the building. Occupying the metal-framed structures, which are clad in brushed and varnished metal, are desks and shelves made from white or orange Corian, depending on their function. Programmable LEDs supply the necessary lighting. The pink multimedia version – equipped with lounge chairs, screens, speakers and headphones – immerses the user in a private world of sound and images.

Further isolation from the surrounding stir is created by metallic mesh that works like a curtain to separate but not entirely close off an individual section of the booth. Visitors take note: nothing in this unconventional ‘theatre’ can be counted on to remain static. It’s all on the move.

manuelle-gautrand.com

WORDS: CHRIS SCOTT
PHOTOS: VINCENT FILLON