



The Polonsky Exhibition of The New York Public Library’s TREASURES Exhibition Design and Branding by Pure+Applied On view fall 2021—2096 (anticipated)

“There are striking juxtapositions and surprising sightlines, and objects that tell different stories depending on the angle you look from. . . . The library, many would say, is itself one of the city’s treasures.”
—*The New York Times*

It was Pure+Applied’s honor and pleasure to design *The Polonsky Exhibition of The New York Public Library’s TREASURES*, set to be on view for the next 75 years. Our vision for exhibition was to create a secular cathedral of learning — a space for pilgrimage, community-building, interpretation, and the exchange of ideas.

P+A’s work was powered by our longstanding commitment to welcoming diverse audiences into the Schwarzman Building’s awe-inspiring spaces.

It was deeply informed by our studio’s decade-long history of designing NYPL exhibitions and experiences, and by our spirited and enriching collaboration with NYPL, Mecanoo, Beyer Blinder Belle, and Goppion.

For *The Polonsky Exhibition of The New York Public Library’s TREASURES*, P+A took on the challenge of **creating an aesthetic to stand the test of time** — an aesthetic that not only lives up to the promise of the Schwarzman Building’s architecture, but also embodies the NYPL’s ideals of public access and service. We knew it had to complement the soaring and ennobling Gotesman Hall while remaining relevant, compelling, and welcoming for the 75-year exhibition lifespan.

As in all of P+A's projects, **visitor experience was of paramount importance.** Our design supports the goals of welcoming large, diverse audiences and providing impactful learning experiences for individuals. We established a layout that not only guides visitors on a journey, but also supports unexpected vistas and avenues of exploration — **provoking and accommodating curiosity and contemplation.** We worked in concert with the elements of the majestic Gottesman Hall to invite visitors to experience the grandness of the room and discover the jaw-dropping treasures on display.

“For more than 125 years, The New York Public Library has collected, preserved, and made accessible the world’s knowledge. Now, for the first time, *The Polonsky Exhibition of The New York Public Library’s TREASURE* showcases some of the most extraordinary items from the 56 million in our collections, inspiring and empowering visitors to discover, learn, and create new knowledge—today and in the years ahead. **The treasures in this exhibition tell the stories**

of people, places, and moments spanning 4,000 years—from the emergence of the written word through to the present day.”
—NYPL

Designing a treasures exhibition of this caliber required careful attention to the past, present, and future — to the historic significance of NYPL and its collections, the library’s mission to inspire and educate, and NYPL’s reach toward the audiences of tomorrow. To achieve our goals, P+A combined an in-depth understanding of the institution with creative ideas about how to address practical, but critical, considerations. Our design showcases exhibition content while remaining sensitive to visitors and conducive to future permutations of displays over time.

From conceptual development, to graphic identity and branding, to drawings, elevations, installation, and future planning, our studio treated every step of the design process with the care it deserved — ultimately creating an exhibition experience that will be treasured by millions.



View from the Treasures exhibition entrance.



ABOVE: A case displaying Thomas Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence anchors the central procession into the exhibition. BELOW: The "Beginnings" section of the exhibition highlights collection items representing knowledge and progress.





ABOVE: The casework, manufactured by Goppion, is clad in a bronze patina to match Gottesman Hall's existing finishes. BELOW: Cut-throughs in the display walls of the case interiors allow views of other sections of the gallery.





ABOVE: Low-iron, non-reflective glass used in the casework allows visitors to see the works on display as clearly as possible.
BELOW: Pure+Applied worked with NYPL to conceive the best ways to display the objects given their conservation needs.





ABOVE: Specially-designed cases were needed to display items such as Audubon's large volume of *Birds of America*.
BELOW: Elizabeth Catlett's *Political Prisoner* highlights the collections of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.





ABOVE: Pure+Applied used the gallery's architecture to frame key collection items such as George Washington's "Farewell Address." BELOW: Wall cases were designed to display large works such as Albrecht Durer's *The Triumph of Maximilian*.





For Enquiries

Pure+Applied

www.pureandappliedstudio.com

info@pureandapplied.com

212.929.9449

About Pure+Applied

Pure+Applied is a +disciplinary design studio whose mission is to create spaces—physical and virtual—that invite people to linger and learn. The studio's areas of expertise include graphic design, branding and identity, master planning and strategy, exhibition design, and content development.

We approach each project as a fresh and specific challenge. Unlike purely formal design solutions, our solutions translate to different media and add layers of complexity, subtly, and nuance. One of our most important aims is to provide sound guidance. We consider the cost, usage, and life expectancy of a particular project in order to responsibly recommend programming, technology, and materials.