Optoma projectors light up Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries Costume Exhibition at heritage-listed Rippon Lea

Introduction

The National Trusts of Australia (NTA) are community-based, non-profit, non-government organisations committed to promoting and conserving Australia's indigenous, natural, and historic heritage. The NTA (Victoria) is the producer behind the Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries Costume Exhibition (MFMMCE) at the historic Rippon Lea mansion in Melbourne, Victoria. The exhibition features costumes and props from the popular Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries television program featured on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).

The challenge

Rippon Lea is a heritage-listed, historic building. Like all heritage-listed properties, there are strict limitations around developing or altering a building in any way. This presented a number of logistical challenges for the NTA when Rippon Lea was chosen as the venue for MFMMCE.

For many exhibitions, the venue requires new furnishings - such as new or additional lighting, display cabinets and fixtures, and new wall treatments - among other changes. In many cases, the exhibition venue's interiors are designed to have these items attached, with flexible internal layouts to accommodate any number of displays.

Rippon Lea, however, does not have this flexibility, as major interior alterations are heavily restricted or entirely forbidden. Because of this, the NTA needed to source alternative solutions that would let it create a compelling, opulent exhibition without changing the interiors of Rippon Lea.

The solution

To circumvent the restrictions at Rippon Lea, the NTA designed an exhibition that made heavy use of projectors to beam images onto different surfaces, namely walls and mannequins. This way, there would be a full complement of material on display, with little disruption to existing internal walls and fixtures.

The NTA recognised it needed a fleet of portable and easily-mounted projectors. Having previously used Optoma handheld projectors for tours at another historic building, the NTA chose to invest in several new, compact Optoma projectors through local distributor, Amber Technology.

Project requirements

The projectors for the exhibition needed to:

- Be small enough to be recessed into corners
- Be quiet enough to be unnoticed
- Be cool enough to not overheat in small spaces and burn surrounding fixtures
- Be easily mountable and light enough to not require drilling into walls
- Be bright enough to be seen in daylight
- Project an image detailed enough to faithfully reproduce images from the television program.

Amber Technology helped the NTA determine which products would best suit the exhibition's needs, and how many would be needed. The NTA chose a selection of compact short-throw and larger long-throw projectors from Optoma.

With extensive technical support from Amber Technology, the NTA was able to design an exhibition that would make the most of the imagery despite the building's structural limitations.

The projectors were strategically located in unobtrusive locations throughout the exhibition space. High definition short-throw projections beamed faces of characters from the Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries television program onto the faces of mannequins dressed in period costumes.

Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries Costume Exhibition

One of the displays - dubbed the 'Jack Robinson Murder Mystery Machine' - had a compact projector displaying the moving face of character Detective Inspector Jack Robinson onto a mannequin. Coupled with an audio track, visitors were met with quasi-live and speaking Inspector Robinson, and encouraged to participate in an interactive game at the exhibition.

Larger projectors were used to build ambience from the television show. Large throw projectors would beam imagery of the program's background sets, furnishings, and designs onto the walls and lightweight, moveable screens. This meant that the NTA was able to transform Rippon Lea's interiors without disturbing the building's existing fixtures.

The exhibition visitors, comprised primarily of fans of the television show, were delighted by the displays and the interactive 'Jack Robinson Murder Mystery Machine'. The NTA saw over 60,000 visitors through its doors within the first three months of the exhibition - an exceptional start given the size of the exhibition - with more than 30 per cent of visitors participating in the exhibition game. This presented a positive increase from the average take-up rate of less than 10 per cent.

Martin Green, Learning and Interpretations Manager, the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), said, "Amber Technology provided the NTA with extensive end-to-end support, from the initial project briefing through to post-sales.
Amber Technology discussed existing and potential needs to ensure the solution we chose would be adaptable for future projects at the NTA.

"The heritage-listed Rippon Lea mansion presented a series of logistical challenges, which meant we had to think of a flexible way of creating an engaging and visually exciting space without modifying the building's existing fixtures. Amber Technology recommended a solution based on Optoma projectors, which met our requirements perfectly. These products are versatile and perform exceptionally well, projecting superior quality images in bright and dimly lit environments. Easy to use and move between different areas of the venue, these Optoma projectors are versatile for use in virtually any application," continued Green.

The Optoma projectors will remain an integral part of the exhibition for its entire life-span. The exhibition has left Rippon Lea and is currently touring Australia. It will make its home at a number of different venues in major cities over the coming months.

Product specifications and quantity

3 x Optoma EH500 Full HD 3D data projectors

- 4,700 ANSI Lumens and 10,000:1 contrast ratio
- HDMI 1.4a 3D support
- Dimensions: 330x260x120 mm
- Weight: 3.9kg

5 x Optoma ML750 ultra-compact LED projectors

- A full LED projector with 700 ANSI Lumens and 10,000:1 contrast ratio
- LED Life lasts over 20,000 hours
- Dimensions: 105x106x39 mm
- Weight: 0.4kg

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