

# SPACE CENTER HOUSTON

Larry French, of S. Leonard Auerbach and Associates takes us behind the scenes of NASA's new exhibition facility.

The new visitors center for the NASA Johnson Space Center in Clear Lake, Texas, provides a hands on experience of the adventures of human space exploration in a visually dazzling environment.

The project was on an extremely fast track. The lighting design team S. Leonard Auerbach & Associates in San Francisco, coordinated by Larry French in collaboration with Clive Grout of architects Waisman Dewar Grout Carter and Bob Rogers and Chuck Roberts of BRC Imagination Arts, had just five months from beginning the design development to completion.

## THE PLAZA

The Space Center Plaza is a large atrium which holds the original lunar module trainer and a full scale mock up of the Space Shuttle cockpit. Off the Plaza are IMAX and IWERKS film theaters, a 570mm film theater, a "live" format theater showing communication between Houston Mission Control and space shuttle crews, an interactive experience area with space shuttle flight simulators and a live orientation show, called "Living in Space".

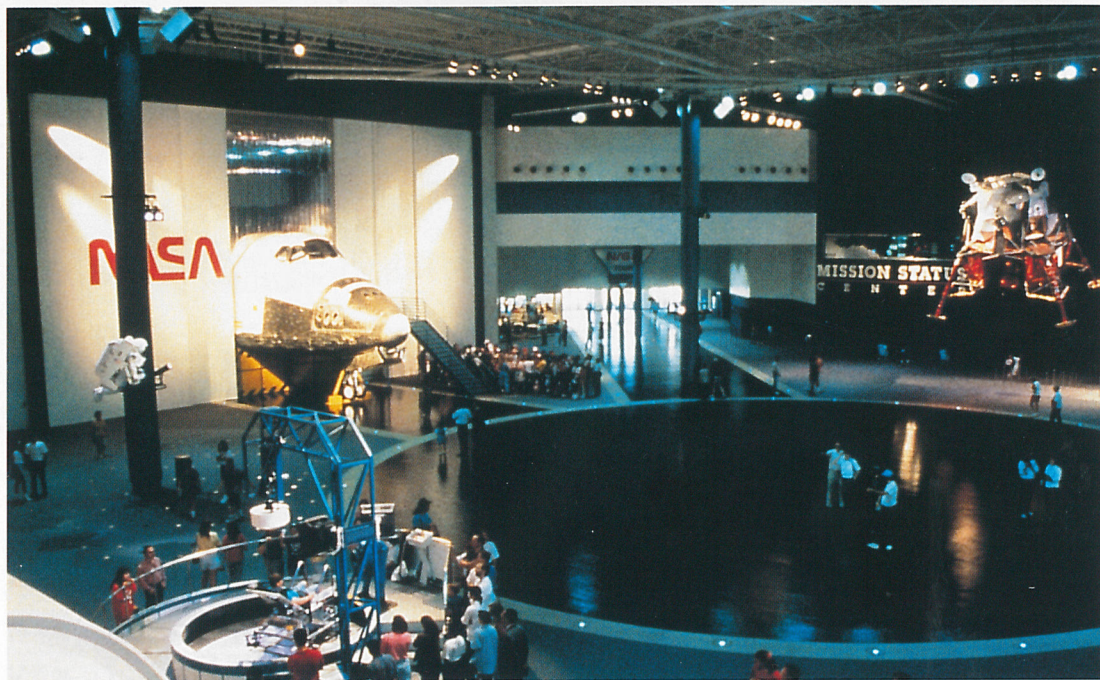
Luminaire mounting locations in the Space Center Plaza were limited to the exposed truss-work. All exhibits were illuminated with a mixture of 5°, 10°, 20° and 30° Leko fixtures using tungsten halogen sources and luminaires with PAR 64's. Theatrical glass color filters were eventually installed, after initial color trials using gel color filters, to ensure color stability over time.

## SPACE CENTER THEATER

The 870mm film theater is fully automated and is one of a few in the world incorporating both the IMAX and IWERKS film formats. All incandescent circuits are dimmed on a centralized system which receives automated commands from a show controller.

## MISSION STATUS

The Mission Status Theater often uses pre-recorded segments of film and video to provide information about current space missions. When a live mission is in progress, these pre-recorded segments may be preempted by the moderator at any time to live link footage with the astronauts. Both general lighting and console lighting using Leko spotlights dim automatically from a centralized system based upon pre-recorded or live commands initiated by the moderator.



The Space Center Plaza.

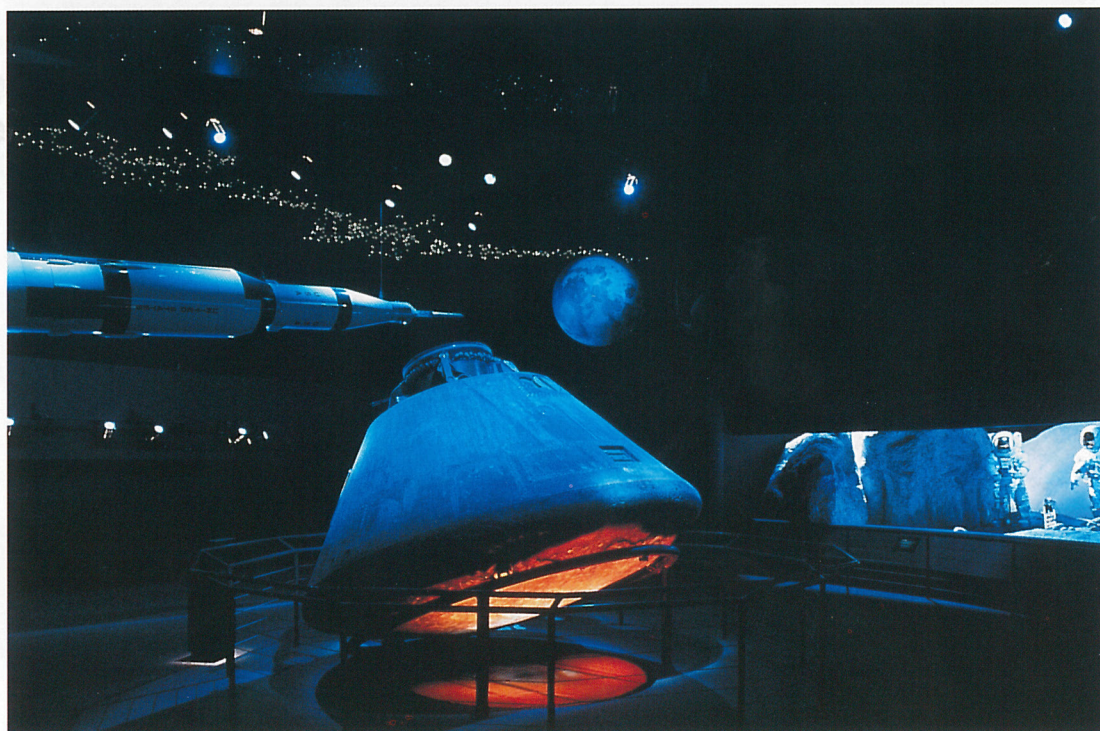
## STARSHIP GALLERY / DESTINY THEATER

A fibre optic star field containing a night view of the earth's surface with sunrise are a background to several space artefacts.

The isolation of humans in space

was evoked through careful use of angle, source and color. Color was used to produce a "cold outside/warm inside" feel for the artefacts. A rim light effect for the "sun" side or key light for the artifact exteriors was created through use of a high focus angle and a pale cold blue color. The "dark" side of the

exteriors were lit from low angles wherever possible and with very saturate blues. In some cases, the heat shields were subtly warmed with orange reds. All exterior lighting was accomplished using both mini zoom and 6" fresnel theatrical fixtures with glass color media.



Amazing exhibits are skillfully lit to convey the effect of space.