



## Mysterious Shape-Changer

*Aiorema grows seamlessly out of the asphalt like a glowing stalagmite. The structural marquee bears the inscription "Portland Center Stage."*

**[Interior Design]** The sculpture created by artist James Harrison was to have a "ghostly, ephemeral" aura, he says. And at first sight, it certainly gives no hint of the sophisticated technology concealed inside, like the fiber optic ropes fed by a 150-watt light source that illuminate the sculpture. Nor does one see the three solid steel rods that keep Aiorema in shape. All in all, the structure makes quite a few passersby stop in their tracks.

### *Show the best, hide the rest*

The easiest way to hide the technical equipment would have been to install a platform beneath the sculpture. "Unfortunately that would have given it a completely mundane appearance," Harrison says. So he came up with a different idea. The sculpture is shaped like a cloud at the base and like a star against the sky. The shapes that symbolize the Greek seat of the gods thus morph into each other. It took a total of 215 individual sections that the artist cut from 27 ACRYLITE® Satin Ice sheets using a water jet cutter. The individual parts were then post-tensioned on site on three steel rods inserted in the asphalt.

To conceal the technical equipment, Harrison created a cavity in the middle of the structure, which was later to accommodate the fiber optic ropes. The sole access is provided by a door at the base of the sculpture. For this, Harrison cut segments about 30 cm wide out of some of the large sheets at the base of Aiorema and bonded them separately. The door itself also had to be segmented so as not to detract from the overall impression. The artist screw-fastened the segments with special screws that can only be undone with a special screwdriver. He did this to prevent anyone who happens to have an ordinary screwdriver on them from snuffing out Aiorema's light.

### *Eye-catcher with a history*

The American designer created the sculpture made of ACRYLITE® Satin Ice for the famous Portland Center Stage (PCS) in the state of Oregon. Shortly before, the theater had moved to the city's renovated historic Armory building. To draw people's attention to the new location, PCS needed a real eye-catcher.

Aiorema is the Greek word for what is known in Latin as *deus ex machina*, a god from a machine. The term has two

meanings: a contrivance used in ancient Greek theater to resolve a seemingly intractable problem in the plot, and the name of the device that brought off this theatrical trick - a crane that was used to lower an actor playing a god onto the stage while he announced his improbable solution.

"I thought Aiorema was an appropriate way to link old and new. New theater, old concept - old building, new marquee," Harrison explains.

### *Aiorema's secret*

It is not by chance that the sculpture was made from ACRYLITE®. "This material met all the requirements," the designer sums up. "It is hard enough to provide stable structures that are affordable, unlike some other synthetic materials." Added to this, it is highly weather-resistant and has the required light transmission properties. ACRYLITE® Satin Ice is translucent but not transparent, and has a special diffuser structure that offers exceptional lighting properties. It distributes the light evenly across the entire surface without revealing any of its innermost secrets.

Aiorema remains a mystery to the eye. *smw*

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*Aiorema consists of 215 individual parts assembled by hand.*