

# GIVE US A SMILE

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**150 BACKLIT BLADES CREATE A NEW VIRTUAL FAÇADE FOR AN ART CENTRE IN TOURS.**

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In the context of his research on contemporary art and architecture, Paris-based architect Philippe Chiambaretta was led to reflect upon the communicative functions of a façade for the Centre de Création Contemporaine (CCC) in the city of Tours (France) in the Loire Valley. The contemporary art centre opened in 1985 in the former garage of a 1960s housing

complex, but it lacked visibility and identity and so suffered from a poor relationship with the public space. 'In the CCC, there is a skeleton; we have to give it a face and a smile,' said the architect when he saw the building for the first time.

As in plastic surgery, a second skin was grafted onto the CCC. To explain its deformations, our Nip/Tuck architect refers to a cell membrane 'with in- and out-going forces that correspond to the flow of visitors and a desire to interact with the surroundings'. Designed to be a dynamic process that generates an irrational, virtual shape, the CCC façade is made of 150 backlit Plexiglas blades. The back

of each blade is lined with white LEDs to create a string of light, and all together the effect is an elusive wave of light strings. This vaporous, 4-m-high skin offers visitors multiple viewpoints that waver between optical and physical effects in a diaphanous street atmosphere. Made of voids and strings of light, this façade reveals the consistency of an interstitial space that demarcates the inside from the outside, and acts as an urban beacon.

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