

The Price of Freedom

The National Museum of American History, Washington DC



The Price of Freedom exhibit at the National Museum of American History, which premiered in 2004, continues to break museum attendance records. The 18,000 sq. ft. exhibit explores how wars have shaped the nation's history and transformed society. Poignant objects, first person accounts, A/V presentations, interactive experiences and theatrical dioramas offer a look at how our country fought to establish independence, determine its borders, shape its concepts and values, and define its role in world affairs. Critical to producing a world class lighting design for this exhibit was the requirement to work within the infrastructural limits of the existing gallery; limitations that included scant little electrical service.



To circumnavigate this challenging dilemma Available Light researched, tested and ultimately deployed alternative light source technologies in the gallery luminaires. Traditionally, exhibits are lit using incandescent light sources which are renowned for their excellent color rendering properties but disdained due to both their high energy requirements and relatively short lamp life. After much initial (and well-placed) pessimism we were able to demonstrate that current generation metal halide light sources had come of age and were capable of replacing the much less efficient incandescent source. Consequently, we were able to reduce our electrical requirements by 40% and quadruple time between lamp changes—all without compromising a dramatic and compelling visitor experience.



Exhibit Design: Christopher Chadbourne & Associates
Completed: 2004