

# Reimagining the Beaux Arts Ball: How the Architectural League of New York Embraced the SpatialWeb

## T H E A R C H I T E C T U R A L L E A G U E N Y

The Architectural League of New York revived the Annual Beaux Arts Ball in 1990. Ever since then, the event has been one of the highlights of the NYC architecture and design community. However, in early 2021, the pandemic put a damper on the celebrations. The League needed to find a different way to do things.

The League turned to SpatialWeb's extended reality capabilities, and with the help of top-notch architects, designers, and studios, they successfully pulled off an ambitious reconception of the Beaux Arts Ball in the virtual space.



**Using the SpatialWeb, we were able to custom-build a completely unique 3D venue from the top down, without being beholden to fire codes or even physical laws.**

— Daniel Cioffi, Development & Membership Manager, The Architectural League of New York

## THE CHALLENGE

### Pandemic Party-Planning

An annual highlight of New York's design community, the Beaux Arts Ball gathers more than 1,200 architects, artists, designers, and their colleagues and friends in places of architectural interest. However, with the restrictions of the pandemic, the Architectural League of New York needed to find a way to hold the ball virtually.

The problem was, they didn't want to just hop on a Zoom call. As Paul Lewis, president of the Architectural League, pointed out during his opening speech of the event:

**“We were very aware of Zoom's inverse relationship between the size of the crowd and the social quality allowed. The larger the Zoom meeting, the more distant and isolated each person is. This is a collective event for the architecture community, and it was not going to go well on Zoom.”**

However, without a solution, there was only one other way the event could go: cancellation, which would mean a ton of loss on their end.

“We could conceivably have lost revenue, as the event is a significant fundraiser for our programs,” Daniel Cioffi, the League's development & membership manager, said.

“Additionally, the in-person Ball is an opportunity to engage talented young architects and designers from our network to provide designs or an installation, and that would have risked sacrificing the creative possibilities of that important event component.”

For the event planners, the challenge was two-fold:

1. To reconceive the annual Beaux Arts Ball as a unique and compelling virtual event.
2. To use the event to foster a sense of connection and community among their supporters.

## **This Is (Not) the Beaux Arts Ball**

The Architectural League of New York partnered with SpatialWeb and Benneville Studios to stage the event. The evening was appropriately named “This is not a Beaux Arts Ball.”

“Using SpatialWeb, we were able to custom-build a completely unique 3D venue from the top down, without being beholden even to fire codes or, indeed, physical laws,” said Daniel.

With the help of Kevin Hirth, from the Kevin Hirth Co. in Colorado, and Neyran Turan, founding partner of NEMESTUDIO, the League managed to create a unique event experience that scaled well to the event’s needs. Daniel said:

**“The customizable spatial element was central, as it allowed us to work in the annual tradition of the Beaux Arts Ball by engaging designers to create ephemeral, completely custom visual experiences for attendees.”**

Evan Zierk, a Brooklyn-based composer, was also brought in to work on the sound design for the virtual space, giving the event a much needed depth.

“Rather than a single large meeting with few communication channels for smaller groups or one-on-one interactions, the SpatialWeb gives several hundred people the opportunity to participate and engage directly with each other,” Daniel added.

## **Defying Expectations**

Paul expressed his gratitude during his opening speech, “The team from Beneville Studios and SpatialWeb has been fantastic in enabling this event to happen.”

The Architectural League of New York believed that most of their attendees were already expecting a more conventional, more Zoom-like approach to the event, so it came as both a surprise and a delight to their audience when SpatialWeb’s extended reality was introduced to them.

As such, the League succeeded in creating a unique and memorable experience for their attendees that both continued and complicated the traditions of the annual Beaux Arts Ball. As Daniel put it:

**“Participants felt enthusiastic and impressed to take part in an event that challenged them and defied their expectations.”**



[www.spatialweb.net](http://www.spatialweb.net)

Copyright ©2021 SpatialWeb. All Rights Reserved