

## SUSTAINABLE EXHIBITION DESIGN



Rudolf Durheim,  
with the house  
© Philippe Jabre Art

**1933–56**  
Urbanisation  
along the river

**1968**  
Death of the  
Construction of river

**2000**  
Construction of Sukomi waste  
treatment in Beirut River Estuary

**Spotlight**  
How designers are  
making exhibitions  
more sustainable  
**58**

**The guide**  
Devising and staging  
exhibitions that are  
more carbon friendly  
**63**

**Case study**  
Using recyclable  
cardboard sees less  
waste sent to landfill  
**65**



design and aims to set a new benchmark for sustainability in large-scale cultural production.”

### Nissen Richards Studio

The Imperial War Museum London’s *Uns silenced: Sexual Violence in Conflict* (23 May-2 November 2025) addressed a subject that inevitably shaped the design approach.

Pippa Nissen, director at Nissen Richards Studio, says: “The subject – sexual violence in conflict – demanded a design language that was restrained, respectful, and human. Nothing could be overblown or theatrical – clarity and sensitivity had to lead every decision.”

This approach dovetailed with sustainability, which Nissen explains asks for “restraint and economy of means”. One area in which this was realised was through the choice and use of materials.

“We ‘de-walled’ the exhibition wherever possible, replacing solid partitions with fabric stretched over lightweight frames,” says Nissen. “This immediately reduced the amount of material required and generated far less waste, while giving the space a crafted, humane quality.”

The main challenge was balancing conservation and the subject matter with sustainability.

**Nissen Richards Studio created a clear and calm design that respected the impact of the stories being told at Imperial War Museum London’s *Uns silenced: Sexual Violence in Conflict* exhibition**

**Textiles and embroidery were used to add a softer, more human aspect to help set the tone of the *Uns silenced: Sexual Violence in Conflict* exhibition at London’s Imperial War Museum**

Fragile artefacts, for example, required highly controlled environments and robust display solutions that were less recyclable.

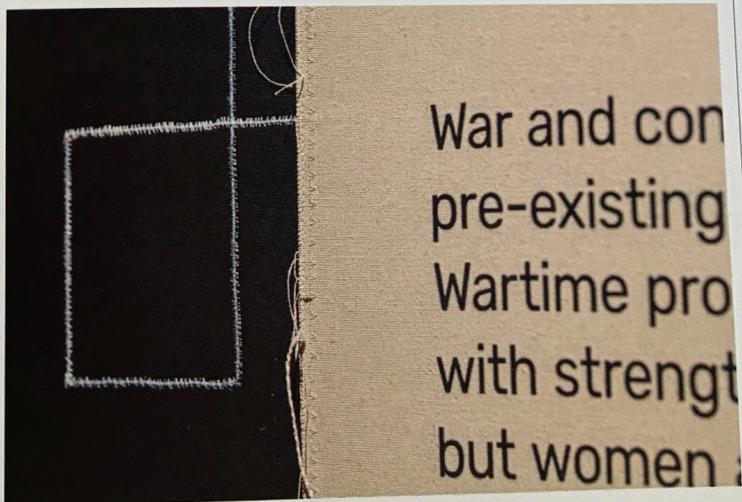
Nissen says: “Rather than seeing these as failures, we treated them as necessary trade-offs. Sustainability is not perfectionism; it’s about pushing forward where possible, while accepting the limits of reality.”

The team didn’t employ formal measures or tools but used sustainability as a lens through which it considered the entire

process, not just the physical build.

This included transportation and logistics, with the aim of reducing site deliveries, limiting unnecessary physical visits and handling information exchanges digitally.

“Success was judged on whether we had managed to reuse rather than replace, reduce rather than multiply, simplify rather than overproduce, and build with quality,” says Nissen. “While we lacked hard data, the ethos was clear: doing more with less and embedding care into the making of the exhibition.”



GARETH GARDNER (UNSI LENCED: SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT PHOTOS)