Henry VIII’s favourite warship, the Mary Rose, sank during a battle with the French in 1545 with 500 men on board. WilkinsonEyre was commissioned in 2005 to design a museum to permanently house the hull of the ship, which was raised from the seabed of The Solent near Portsmouth in 1982.

The hull, supported in a dry dock, requires highly specialist environmental conditions to preserve it, so the design takes an inside-out approach, cradling the hull at the centre of the new museum.

A virtual hull has been created alongside this to represent the missing section, within which the original artifacts are displayed in context. These context galleries run the length of the ship, corresponding to the original deck levels and leading to further gallery space at the end of the dry dock.

Designing a museum for the Mary Rose and its artefacts was a challenge of many layers. The architectural language had to be appropriate to the ship and to its unusual context among HMS Victory and the listed admiralty buildings of Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

WilkinsonEyre worked with interior architects Perkins + Will on the project.