



Making the office desirable : ERCO lighting supports responsive design and staff wellbeing in future-proof revamp of Zaha Hadid Architects office

Known for radical designs like the MAXXI art museum in Rome and the London Aquatics Centre, Zaha Hadid Architects (ZHA) faced a different type of challenge in overhauling its London headquarters. Instead of a new building, the world-leading architecture practice has renovated 101 Goswell Road, a former garment factory. A custom-designed lighting system from ERCO played a crucial role in this transformation, allowing the historic building to become a flexible environment for multi-faceted and collaborative forms of work.

[Link to the film](#)

Project data:

Project:	Zaha Hadid Architects 101 Goswell Road, London / Great Britain
Architecture:	Zaha Hadid Architects London / Great Britain
Photography:	Gavriil Papadiotis, London / Great Britain

New ways of working

ZHA has occupied the seven-storey former factory since 2012, but the team was previously divided between this property and a converted schoolhouse on nearby Bowling Green Lane. A shift in thinking came as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, when employees were primarily working from home. The ZHA directors saw an opportunity to consolidate to a single location and rethink how the office should function. Rather than trying to pack in as many desks as possible, the idea was to support different types of

work style, offering staff greater choice and flexibility in how they work, and increasing possibilities for meaningful interaction. 'We needed to give them a reason to make the journey into the office,' explains director Chris Lepine. 'We came to the conclusion that space for meetings and collaboration was key.'

Improving visual comfort

With larger floorplates and a more visible street presence than the old schoolhouse, the Goswell Road building was considered the most future-proof option, but it also

presented challenges. The building had very low ceilings and a stair and lift core located close to the end wall, so natural light was unable to reach much of the interior. 'We had one very long wall with no daylight coming through,' recalls Lepine. 'We realised that, if we were going to do this refurbishment right, we would have to create lighting that did the space justice.'

Enhancing the feeling of spaciousness was the starting point for the [human-centric lighting system](#) developed with ERCO. [Opton](#) wall-washers improve the overall perception of brightness, while [Jilly](#) downlights for track create the impression that ceilings are higher than they actually are. Illumination is delivered discreetly to where it is needed, rather than across the entire space, with light fittings that are largely hidden from view. This improves visual comfort without creating obvious patches of light and shadow. 'Sometimes I don't realise the lights are on until I'm right under them and look up,' says Lepine.

No more one-size-fits-all

With spotlights that can be easily repositioned in the track without tools, a key advantage of the [Jilly](#) system is its flexibility. This was a key goal in the reconfiguration of 101 Goswell Road, which was developed with ZHA's Analytics + Insights unit (ZHAi), a research group that uses digital data and artificial intelligence to intelligently predict the future of workspace design. 'In the past, there was a one-size-fits-all approach in office design, but that has completely gone out of the window,' says Ulrich Blum, co-lead of ZHAi. 'Workspaces need to be adaptable to, even on short notice, cater for differences in how teams work together.' This led to a design that provides fewer desks but offers a wider variety of spaces where people can come together. One example of this is the fourth floor, which has been converted into a social space that can facilitate casual meetings and chance encounters.

Circulation spaces are located towards the centre of the floor plan, anchored by a multi-faceted cork wall that extends through the full height of the building. Track mounted [Opton](#) and recessed [Starpoint](#) luminaires in 3000k give a warmer colour temperature here, emphasising this as the building's 'heart', in contrast with the cooler tones of lighting within the workspaces. [Opton](#) spotlights meanwhile offer dramatic, directional illumination to architectural models and

drawings that are dotted throughout the building, as a testament to the impressive scope of architectural projects that ZHA produces.

[Casambi Bluetooth wireless control](#) allows lights to be easily switched or dimmed, either individually or in groups, which comes in useful when ZHA wants to change up its displays. But it also makes it easy to create spatial variety, so staff can find a place to work that suits them best. 'When people work from home, they are able to personalise everything,' says Blum. 'This autonomy is something they really cherish, so we needed to give them the ability to influence their environment.' The system is also responsive to fluctuations in occupancy, turning off lights automatically in spaces that are not in use, which improves energy efficiency.

Space for display

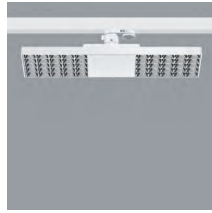
The ground and basement floors combine exhibition galleries with facilities for design research and digital fabrication, allowing ZHA to create varied showcases of architecture innovation. These floors also facilitate other public-facing activities, from intimate dinners and drinks events, to workshops and panel talks. ERCO's [Parscan 48V](#) spotlights allow ZHA to highlight different zones, depending on the use. 'We can orient the room in different ways,' says Melodie Leung, associate director at ZHA. 'Sometimes we want it to be very broad and unified as a space, other times we want it to be more dramatic.'

Leung believes these shopfront-style spaces play a crucial role in helping people understand the process behind ZHA's architecture. One recent exhibition incorporated dynamic lighting effects that gave a sense of animation to the objects and materials on display. 'It's really important for us to create an environment,' adds Leung, 'so when people enter, they're entering the world of Zaha Hadid Architects.'

Since moving back into 101 Goswell Road in late 2021, ZHA has been trialling different ways of combining remote working with in-office collaboration. The response so far has been positive, with staff noticeably mingling and interacting even more, despite being in the office less. The result is a dynamic environment that feels befitting of an architectural practice with its focus firmly on the future.

[Link to the film](#)

Luminaires used in the project



Jilly



Opton



Skim



Starpoint



Parscan 48V



Lucy

About ERCO

ERCO is an international specialist for high-quality and digital architectural lighting. The family-owned company, founded in 1934, operates globally in 55 countries with independent sales organisations and partners.

ERCO understands light as the fourth dimension of architecture – and thus as an integral part of sustainable building. Light is the contribution to making society and architecture better and, at the same time, preserving our environment. ERCO Greenology® – the corporate strategy for sustainable lighting – combines ecological responsibility with technological expertise.

At the light factory in Lüdenscheid, Germany, ERCO develops, designs and manufactures

luminaires with a focus on photometric optics, electronics and sustainable design. The lighting tools are developed in close collaboration with architects, lighting designers and electrical designers. They are used primarily in the following applications: Work and Culture, Community and Public/Outdoor, Contemplation, Living, Shop and Hospitality. ERCO lighting experts support designers worldwide in transforming their projects into reality with highly precise, efficient and sustainable lighting solutions.

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