



Light for commercial galleries: flexible exhibition lighting in the Xavier Hufkens Gallery, Brussels

For each new exhibition, together with the artists, the team at Xavier Hufkens Gallery develops an individual vision for space and presentation. The necessary scope is created by the distinctive building annex – and a lighting system that unites flexibility with highest quality of light.

Project data:

Project:	Xavier Hufkens Gallery, Brussels / Belgium
Architecture:	Robbrecht en Daem Architecten, Ghent / Belgium
Lighting design:	SiSi (Siegrid Siderius), Amsterdam / Netherlands
Installation:	Dimension Lumière, Jacques Verliefden, Exhibition: „Cascade“, Nicolas Party Brussels / Belgium
Photography:	Thomas Mayer, Neuss / Germany

Xavier Hufkens has been dealing in contemporary art for over three decades, and today his gallery is one of the major names on the scene, operates from several locations in Brussels and represents international artists such as Antony Gormley and Tracey Emin. Robbrecht en Daem Architects from Ghent have now extended the historic town house headquarters by creating a striking extension of concrete and glass. With exhibition spaces on five levels, it creates flowing transitions from old to new building. This establishes a wide variety of spatial situations with varying amounts of daylight, thus providing a versatile background for up to six temporary exhibitions per year.

The new spaces at Sint-Jorisstraat exemplify how the right lighting concept is able to

support the optimal display and therefore also the sale of artworks in a commercial gallery. What appears from the outside to be a bold combination of a time-honoured town house with a minimalist, almost windowless concrete building reveals itself inside as a perfect architectural shell for presenting high-calibre contemporary art. Robbrecht en Daem Architects had previously converted the approximately one hundred year old existing building from a town house to a gallery in 1992, and now planned the extension as a monolithic volume. The levels are aligned in such a way that a „promenade architecturale“ can pass through both parts of the building: all floor heights of the new annex match those of the existing building, meaning that the gallery's exhibition spaces over five levels seamlessly merge.

The interplay between the new building and the existing structure creates a diversity of rooms with very different, partly museum-like proportions – room heights vary from 3.10 metres (3rd floor) to 9.10 metres (on the ground floor). This variety of scales corresponds to the diversity of the artworks on display, ranging from small-format prints to monumental paintings, sculptures and expansive installations. The projecting stack structure of the new building allows the use of natural light through skylights on each floor. The rear facade opens out towards the garden via floor-to-ceiling glass surfaces, and in the basement to a newly created atrium. „The diverse incidence of light creates diverse worlds of experience,“ states project architect Kim Poorters. „The art on display, as well as the artificial light, consistently relate to this in new ways.“

General lighting with high visual comfort and sales-promoting accent lighting for art: ERCO LED spotlights and wallwashers in combination

The challenge was to find the right balance between natural and artificial light for the different spaces. „The uniform distribution of light in the rooms was an essential aspect,“ explains the architect. „It influenced where the track was positioned as well as the detailed design of the skylights.“ The lighting concept emerged in close collaboration between the Xavier Hufkens team, lighting designer Siegrid Siderius and electrical contractor Jacques Verliefden. [Eclipse InTrack](#) wallwashers and [track-mounted spotlights](#) combine uniform general lighting in all spaces with focused accent lighting for the works of art. Uniform wallwashing creates a good impression of brightness with a high level of visual comfort for gallery visitors, whilst selectively placed light accents on the individual artworks to present them optimally and in a way that supports sales.

Eclipse spotlights from ERCO feature a uniform design, high quality of light and interchangeable optics

„We organised mock-ups on site and did a number of lighting calculations to find out which wallwasher producer had the best light distribution and luminous efficacy,“ reports lighting designer Siegrid Siderius. „The ERCO wallwasher turned out to be the best. The uniform design of the new [Eclipse](#) where the wallwashers have the same appearance as the spotlights also won over the client and architect.“ All luminaire bodies as well as the track suspended under the corrugated concrete ceiling of the new foyer were specified with silver surfaces. Visually, the interior fittings and technology are kept to a minimum – nothing should distract from presenting the works of art. No superfluous detail disturbs the completely homogeneous impression of the architecture as a blank canvas that adapts with maximum flexibility to the exhibitions that change every six weeks: the Eclipse spotlights are freely positionable on the track.

The light distributions available consist of the interchangeable optics Flood, Spot and

Narrow Spot, and two sets of luminaires with light colours 3000K and 3500K respectively allow the colour mood of the exhibition to be modified to the wishes of the artist. „For each show the gallery team and the artist's team work closely to realise the artist's vision for the space,“ explains Piet Bloquiaux, an employee at Xavier Hufkens. „In some cases, as with the Nicolas Party exhibition, the artist may even choose to paint the wall surfaces in colours matching the artworks.“

The all-round carefree package with ERCO: spectacular gallery lighting and functional workplace lighting from a single source

In order to work efficiently and successfully, today's art galleries need not only prestigious exhibition spaces, but also functional offices and meeting areas with nuanced lighting concepts. In the offices of his gallery in Sint-Jorisstraat, Xavier Hufkens opted for glare-free task lighting with dimmable [Jilly](#) LED downlights from ERCO. These provide employees at VDU workstations with a high level of visual comfort and the option of dimming the light according to the situation, also in the meeting rooms – for example for presentations or for establishing a more relaxed atmosphere when talking to clients. Gallery employee Piet Bloquiaux is completely satisfied with the lighting concept: „It responds to the specific needs and functions of each space and creates a cohesive visual experience throughout the entire building.“

Perfect lighting for commercial galleries: How light supports the sale of art

As in the Xavier Hufkens Gallery in Brussels, the focus of commercial galleries is the direct encounter between artwork and people – and thus also the staging of this moment through light and architecture.

Find out how the ideal gallery lighting succeeds and how light supports the sale of art: The new **ERCO Lichtbericht** with tips and best-practice examples is now available for free download.

The **white paper „Lighting for commercial art galleries“** provides gallery owners and planners with a compact summary of tips for lighting design in different types of galleries – from white cube to dramatic staging in immersive exhibition spaces. Everything for the perfect presentation of art.

Further information:

<https://www.erco.com/press/7677/en>



ERCO Lichtbericht

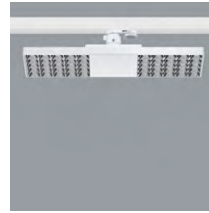


Whitepaper
"Lighting for
commercial art
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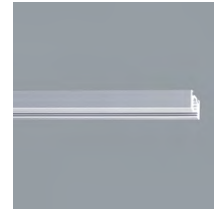
Luminaires used in the project



Eclipse InTrack



Jilly



Track

Copies and links requested.

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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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