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A modern landmark for ancient artefacts, Narbonne, France



A modern landmark for ancient artefacts: ERCO provides sustainable fittings for pioneering Narbo Via museum

- Architecture: Foster + Partners

- Lighting design: George Sexton Associates; ACL, Paris
- Photography: Clément Guillaume, Paris
- Project: Narbo Via Museum, Narbonne
Scenography: Studio Adrien Gardère
Finance institution: Région Occitanie
- Place: Narbonne
- Country: France
- Website: <https://narbovia.fr/>

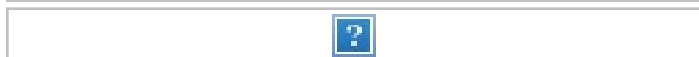
A contemporary museum of Roman antiquities in Narbonne, southern France, Narbo Via is a new landmark at the entrance to the city. The museum is designed by Foster + Partners, the lighting design is created by George Sexton Associates and implemented with ERCO luminaires. Narbo Via embodies sustainable principles and pioneers an innovative approach to museographic design and visitor experience.

Narbo Via, on the Canal de la Robine, is both museum and archaeological research centre, and includes galleries, multimedia education centre and auditorium, as well as research and restoration facilities. The building's walls are thermally insulated, formed by tamping down layers of coloured concrete, evoking rock stratifications and Roman concrete, and referencing the archaeology. Sustainability, a paramount consideration for the museum, was key to Foster's design concept and to the lighting strategy.



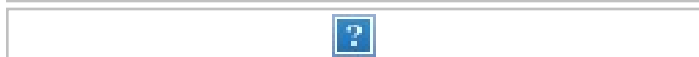
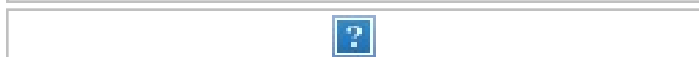
Exceeding energy expectations

Interior lighting uses primarily ERCO's Optec spotlights, around 1000 Dali-controlled fittings with varying beam widths and light distributions to suit individual exhibits and purposes. **'It was important to minimise the power density in the galleries with high-efficacy track lights,' says Joe Geitner, project manager of lighting consultant George Sexton Associates (GSA).**



GSA not only analysed the efficiency of LED track lights available on the market before specifying the Optec luminaires, but was able to supersede the original specification because of ERCO's use of newer LED technology. **'We found several luminaires that could be upgraded in specification because ERCO had increased the performance significantly,' explains Geitner.**

Optoelectronics is a core area of ERCO's expertise. To ensure high efficiency the company develops and manufactures control gear, LED modules and lens systems in-house. These high-precision lighting systems direct the light precisely on to the target area so that light is only used where it is needed. The result combines high illuminance (lux) with low connected load (watt), a decisive factor for sustainable lighting expressed in lx/W.



Powerful and precise

An example was the extensive use of the Optec 4W narrow spot with 5° beam. Although ceilings were high, this enabled powerful and precise accent lighting on exhibits with minimal energy use and no spill light. 'We required multiple beam angles,' says Geitner. 'The interchangeable lenses of the ERCO system provided additional on-site refinement during the focus and commissioning.'



The nature of the displays, largely sculptures and stonework, allowed for daylight levels that contributed to overall sustainability. Balancing light composition, colour and levels of artificial light and daylight needed careful consideration, says Geitner.

'The illumination must appear generous yet within a proscribed level and brightness and meet energy goals. Graphics and media needed to be visually accessible and easy to read. Lighting is balanced and glare-free, enhancing the visitor's experience.'

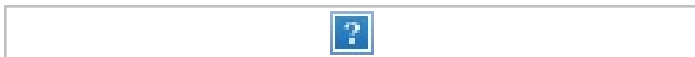


The Lapidary Wall, by Studio Adrien Gardère, exemplifies this artful equilibrium. At the heart of the museum, the wall naturally divides the public galleries from more private restoration spaces. Industrially inspired, the 10m x 76m metal rack has a lifting device that reconfigures the architectural stones on display - 760 blocks - creating a moving mosaic. This allows visitors to glimpse the work of the archaeologists and researchers through a dynamic wall of stone and light.

'The combination of daylight and artificial light to illuminate the wall makes it a bright focal point along the axis of the reception,' says Geitner. 'The angle of daylight and artificial light were carefully designed to make the inscriptions on the ancient Roman stones legible.'



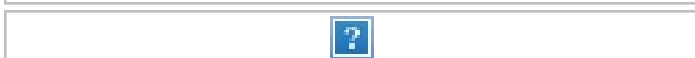
'Museography and architecture are one,' says the museum's curator M'hammed Behel. 'It was so important that the lighting should accentuate and embellish both.' This also extended to the exterior lighting where ERCO's Compact surface-mounted luminaires, recessed in the roof eaves, define the building with an even, glare-free wash of light.



Supporting the vision

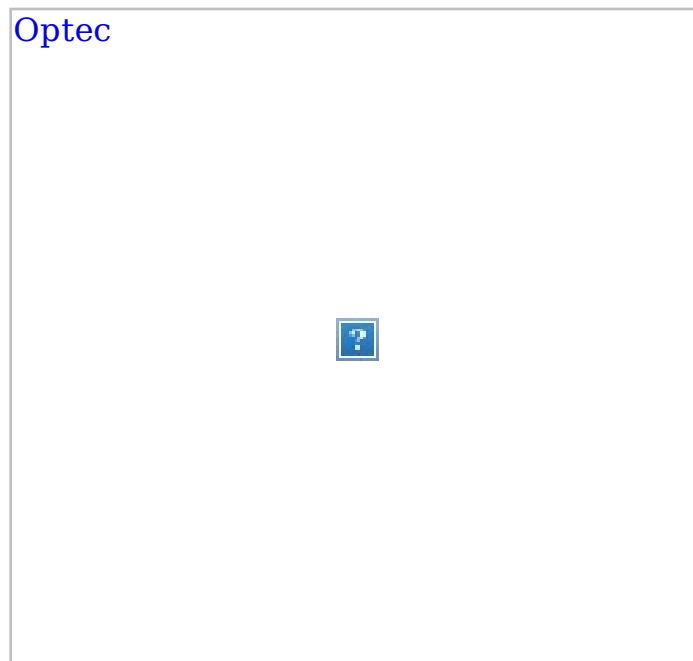
Throughout, the lighting supports the museum's vision and Foster + Partners' 'honest approach to materials'. LEDs are 3000K with a high CRI, 'based on the warmth and richness of the architectural stones on display,' says Geitner.

The results have met the aspirations for both sustainability and visitor experience. 'The ERCO lighting is perfect and fulfils all our expectations,' says M'hammed Behel. 'Our visitors have been so enthusiastic and we have had only congratulations about the way exhibits have been presented.'



Jill Entwistle is the executive editor of Lighting (Illumination in Architecture) and has specialised in architectural lighting both as a magazine editor and writer since 1994. Jill is the author of three books on lighting, including *Detail in Contemporary Lighting Design* (Laurence King). She is the editor of the first BCO (British Council for Offices) Guide to Lighting.

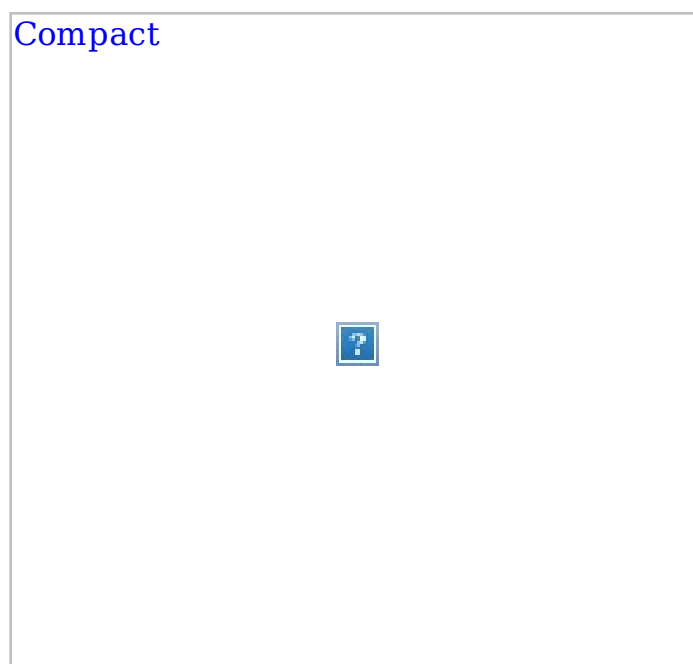
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