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Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte, Hamburg, Germany



Structuring information with ERCO light: "No Beer without the Alster Lake" in the Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte

- Event: "No Beer without the Alster Lake" in the Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte
- Architecture: Fritz Schumacher, Hamburg / Germany
- Photography: Sebastian Mayer, Berlin / Germany
- Exhibition design: IIID brand communication, Hamburg / Germany
- Place: Hamburg
- Country: Germany
- Website: www.hamburgmuseum.de
- 26.1.2017

The venerable Hamburg Museum is celebrating brewing culture in northern Germany with a special exhibition. The organisers have succeeded in showing this cultural history topic in a concise, surprising and entertaining way - with a guidance system of striking graphics and pinpoint accent light from ERCO.

On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the German Purity Law, the "No Beer without the Alster Lake" exhibition focuses on the culture of brewing specifically in northern Germany. The exhibition, displayed across a compact 620 m², ranges from the beginnings of brewing in ancient Egypt to mediaeval times and today and displays around 400 diverse exhibits. Objects from North Germany are shown, for example an original brewing kettle from the 18th century, botanic depictions of hops and grain, sophisticated still lives from the 17th century, historic drinking vessels, advertising panels and beer mats from the 20th century as well as currently popular craft beer brands.

A guidance system with graphics and light

To master this level of contextual and formal diversity in this small space was a major challenge for the exhibition concept. Exhibition designers Volker von Baczko and Oliver Thomas, founders of the IIID brand communication design studio in Hamburg, created an attractive guidance system consisting of only two design elements for concisely structuring the content and guiding visitors through the show. Striking yellow lines mark the way across the floor and up the walls to the exhibition texts on the one hand. On the other, these "beer paths" serve to structure eleven roughly chronological themes concerning the brewing process and beer culture, for example "barrel and barrel makers", "pubs and beer halls" and "Hanseatic breweries". The second essential design element is rich-contrast accent lighting achieved with just a single luminaire range, compact Light Board spotlights from ERCO. Orientation is established in the space entirely without general lighting - only various light accents are used precisely, serving to guide visitors and hierarchically classify the exhibits.

Establishing structure with six light distributions

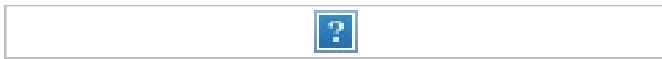
Single exhibits and groups of objects are individually highlighted with various ERCO Spherolit lenses, ranging from narrow spot and spot to flood, oval flood and wallwash light distributions. Whilst a narrow spot illuminates filigree historical drawings on a dark wall, flood light distribution provides the perfect stage for a bright red, historic beer delivery vehicle. The spot light distribution provides uniform lighting for the exhibition texts and larger artworks. Spotlights with oval distribution on the other hand efficiently emphasise the yellow guidance lines, a form of abstract beer pipes. Oval flood frames the large-format quotes with linear beams of light on the walls at the entrance. A sequence of differing light distributions on the wall creates a dynamic visual rhythm to guide visitors along the walls.



Drama with graphics and light: pinpoint lighting accents with ERCO spotlights and modern exhibition graphics structure information and guide visitors through the "No Beer without the Alster Lake" exhibition.



The curator Dr. Ralf Wiechmann from the Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte and the two exhibition designers from IIID brand communication, Volker von Baczko and Oliver Thomas (from left) in front of an 18th century brewing kettle.



The floor plan of the special "No Beer without the Alster Lake" exhibition shows the dramatic composition of the guidance system made up of graphics and light. (Copyright: IID brand communication)

The wall at the end of the space is uniformly flooded with wallwash to ensure the exhibition area to the rear is noticed by visitors. The effect of illuminated vertical planes on human perception is once again demonstrated. "The uniformly wallwashed rear wall dictates the direction in which visitors are drawn to the back of the area," said Volker von Baczko, Corporate Architect at IID brand communication.

In accordance with the principles of perception psychology, light serves to graduate the space and visually structure and hierarchically organise information using various levels of light. "The perception-orientated lighting concept is an essential part of the exhibition design," said Oliver Thomas. "When creating this exhibition, we found that the spotlights with their exchangeable lenses are very practical tools for flexibly designing the rooms, and can also be adjusted during the setup process."



The theme cubes: views with high visual comfort

Black exhibition cubes as high as the room itself structure and increase the exhibition area. Their black walls calm the space to enable visitors to concentrate on the highly diverse objects, shapes and materials. The intuitive discovery of associations and relationships is supported by the small cutouts and semitransparent gauze strips in the cubes that arouse curiosity for the topics within. Precise light accents with good glare control directed onto specific exhibits emphasise important facets and allow less relevant objects to take a step back. The differentiated lighting also provides an impression of spatial depth.



The space for special exhibitions is partly concealed behind the museum café. Large quotes positioned in a linear light beam eye-catchingly guide visitors through a narrow corridor into the central museum room.



In the entrance area, visitors become acquainted with ancient brewing culture. Brilliant LED light from Light Board spotlights models an inscription on the gravestone of a Roman beer brewer.



An entrance that arouses curiosity

In front of the exhibition entrance, large-format quotes on the walls surround a long showcase that

contains historical exhibits referencing beer brewing in ancient times, including the gravestone of a Roman beer brewer and the ground plan of a monastery brewery. Emphasised with accent lighting on the dark grey wall, the texts illuminated with precisely horizontal, linear light serve to draw visitors into the exhibition space. In this way, this scenic prologue succeeds in arousing attention to this unusual exhibition topic despite the entrance being concealed behind two heavy fire protection doors. "Merely showing exhibits in a row doesn't work anymore," explained the curator Dr. Ralf Wiechmann. "Contemporary dramatic exhibition composition means making visitors curious, providing surprises and still keeping a few things open."

Curator Dr. Ralf Wiechmann explains the processes of mediaeval "water art" in today's Hanseatic city centre and the importance of water from the Alster for the quality of beer using a model prepared specifically for the Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte.

The quality of light for each individual object is decisive - with a glazed panoramic window and linear lighting for example, a cube in the centre of the exhibition space invites visitors to browse and linger. An extensive model of the historic Hamburg water supply system can be seen here, the so-called "water art", with lovingly accentuated details rendered in a sculptural way due to the precisely modelling LED light. "The model has been part of our permanent exhibition since the 1990s, but with this precise light the exhibit really comes into its own for the first time in the special exhibition," said a pleased Dr. Wiechmann. Because of good glare control, the light source, which consists of two spotlights with linear light distribution on the ceiling above the open cube, is hardly noticed.

Dr. Ralf Wiechmann, curator of the exhibition "No Beer without the Alster Lake", tells about a highlight in the exhibition: the "Still Life with Beer and Bread" oil painting was painted by the Hamburg artist Georg Hinz (1630-1688) in 1665.

Optimum light for sophisticated objects

Dr. Ralf Wiechmann proudly presents the most valuable exhibit in the exhibition: the Vanitas still life painted by the Hamburg artist Georg Hinz from 1665, a loan from the Hamburger Kunsthalle that depicts a glass of beer next to a piece of half eaten bread. The golden barley juice bubbles as if freshly tapped but the white beer foam is already starting to cave in - a nod to the transience of earthly life. Despite the generally low level of light, sophisticated objects like this one are brilliantly displayed with outstanding colour rendering. "The light makes the minutest details, which also have a symbolic meaning, visible in the painting," said Wiechmann, "and they also comply with the complete spectrum of conservational requirements."



Many historic drawings in the "No Beer without the Alster Lake" exhibition are exceedingly light-sensitive, and for this reason may only be exposed to 50lx. The precise accent light of Light Board spotlights with minimum requisite light levels not only meets conservation demands but also those of the lighting concept based on achieving contrasting effects.



ERCO spotlights are ideal for the protective illumination of conservationally sensitive objects thanks to their almost UV- and IR-free light and also because the spotlights can be smoothly dimmed down to 0.1%.



The Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte - founded in 1908 and now one of the largest local history museums in Europe - has been accommodated in a building designed in 1922 by the Hamburg architect Fritz Schumacher and close to the Reeperbahn 'party mile' in Sankt Pauli.

The feedback has been very positive, reported Wiechmann. Many visitors were quite amazed about the host of new facts concerning local beer culture. The high level of public interest in the special

exhibition clearly shows that smaller cultural institutions and unusual exhibition topics can also create attention with simple means and modern concepts.

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