



Interview

Precision is the key

Project: Walker Tower, New York / USA
Architect: Cetra Ruddy, New York / USA
Lighting designer: Kugler Ning, New York / USA
Photos: Edgar Zippel, Berlin / Germany, Sunhee Lim, New York / USA
Website: www.walker-tower.com
Place: New York

What are the current issues facing the lighting industry in New York? How do you illuminate the façades along Manhattan's skyline without causing glare? Is Dark Sky technology a must particularly for densely populated megacities? In an interview with Sunhee Lim of Kugler Ning – the lighting design firm responsible for the relighting of the historic Walker Tower in New York with ERCO lighting tools, these issues were reviewed.

The Walker Tower in New York was converted into one of the city's most luxurious apartment buildings. Its art deco façade and spires are now illuminated with ERCO Grasshopper and Lightscan projectors. The lighting design for the Walker Tower was executed by the New York lighting design firm Kugler Ning. Its creative approach is based on the idea that lighting renders all materials visible and that lighting design ought to support the look and feel of a project. ERCO spoke to Sunhee Lim, Senior Associate at Kugler Ning, about her hometown and lighting concepts for urban spaces as well as about lighting design of the future.

What is your favorite place in New York and why do you like it?

My favorite place in the city is the reflective pool in Lincoln Center. The water, air and light are very calming and soothing.

In which aspects differs the lighting in the streets of New York to other cities in the United States or Europe?

The height of tall buildings and grid line of street view gives you a completely different visual perspective than the European streets.

What are the most effective and at the same time discreet ways to emphasize historical buildings such as the Carnegie Hall or the Walker Tower with light?

Precision is the key to lighting and enhancing the visual hierarchy of these buildings. Precision in beam angle, colour temperature, and understanding the site and conditions of the buildings are all effective ways to emphasize historical buildings.

Why did you select the ERCO projectors Grasshopper and Lightscan to illuminate the façade and the crown of the Walker Tower?

It was about finding small fixtures with the best optical performance, best track record and low maintenance.

Please explain the challenges for precise lighting in dense urban spaces ...

It's important to find the right balance between façade lighting, lighting of adjacent buildings and being a good neighbour. Whenever possible we orchestrate mock-ups at the site to demonstrate our approach.

How do you illuminate outdoor areas without glaring to avoid light-pollution?

The difficulties were to find the smallest fixtures with the tightest optics to avoid light trespass into the apartments and to find low maintenance fixtures since it is very difficult to gain access to the residential apartments.

What are the essential issues for lighting in metropolises designers and planers are going to care about in the next years?

We want fixtures to be extremely energy efficient and long lasting. They should help our cities come alive at night and not pollute the night sky.