



Report

Barbican Art Gallery, London

Project: Barbican Art Gallery, London / UK
Architect: Chamberlin, Powell und Bon, London / UK
Photographer: Frieder Blickle, Hamburg / Germany
Homepage: www.barbican.org.uk
Place: London
Country: Great Britain

The raw concrete structure of the Barbican Centre makes it one of the most prominent examples of Brutalist architecture in the UK. The art gallery in the centre of London had been illuminated with conventional ERCO lighting tools for around thirty years, and now the switch has been made to state-of-the-art LED technology.

The Barbican Centre, in the City of London, is one of Europe's biggest cultural and conference venues. It is located in an area that was almost completely destroyed during the Second World War. The design for its reconstruction was put out to tender in the 1950s and the winner was the architectural firm of Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, which took Brutalism as the basis for its design. The word "barbican" means "a fortified outpost". Apart from being built of raw concrete, the other main features are the visibility of the materials and the structures, and the simple, clean lines. After years of planning and construction, Queen Elizabeth II inaugurated the Barbican Centre in 1982, declaring the building to be "one of the modern wonders of the world".

Since then, the Barbican Centre has been regarded as an important event venue for dance, music, theatre, visual arts and film. Every year, almost two million visitors from all over the world come to participate in or view the exhibits and events. Apart from a concert hall, theatres, cinemas, conference rooms and galleries, it is home to the London Symphony Orchestra, and also contains a library, various restaurants and a conservatory for exotic fish and flora. The vast range of the cultural spectrum includes the Barbican Art Gallery that stages various exhibitions, ranging through art, architecture, design, fashion and photography.

The Barbican Art Gallery occupies two floors of the venue. The interior architecture builds on basic geometrical shapes such as rectangles, squares and circles. Chunky concrete structures, such as a cuboid concrete column in one exhibition room, serve as design elements. From the first floor, visitors have a spectacular view of the ground floor, thanks to the open-plan stairway, and, also worthy of special mention, a round room with no ceiling, which one can see into from above.

ERCO lighting tools had been used at the Barbican Art Gallery since the eighties, but these were, of course, equipped with conventional lamps. Recently, the decision was taken to replace them with LED solutions for a variety of ecological and economic grounds. The same high standards with regard to luminous efficacy and quality still applied, of course, as did the demanding requirements for the light system's flexibility, given that regularly changing paintings, sculptures and videos have to be displayed in rooms of different heights, optionally using wallwash or spot light distribution, or contour spotlight. A further challenge lay in accentuating this listed building's distinctive architectural features, which include a coffered ceiling. For the upgrade, the Barbican Art Gallery chose the ERCO lighting tools Parscan, Optec, Opton and Pollux, whereby the existing tracks can still be used.



