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Graficas Varias, Barcelona

Report

An experience for customers - great ergonomics for staff: the premises of Graficas Varias near Barcelona

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- Architect (renovations): Pere Pujol Rosell, Sant Sadurní d'Anoia / Spain
 Interior design: Maria Esteban Reche, Metre Quadrat Studio, Sant Sadurní d'Anoia / Spain
 Photographer: Sebastian Mayer, Berlin / Germany

- Place: Barcelona

The new premises of the long-established Catalan graphic design specialist “Graficas Varias” were styled by interior design firm Metre Quadrat Studio. Contrasting materials and light create a visual experience for customers and visitors, and the office lighting with ERCO LED technology meets every ergonomic requirement: A perfectly efficient and sustainable lighting solution.

Subtle lighting, dark wood, modern lounge chairs and cabinets filled with exquisite wines: the bar of a boutique hotel? No: We have entered the facilities of “Graficas Varias”, a graphic design expert based in Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, a town in the Catalan wine-growing region of Penedès, not far from the Spanish metropolis, Barcelona. In 1918, almost exactly a century ago, Josep Varias Bou founded the company that soon specialised in the design and production of labels for the local vineyards. Today, the family business presents itself as a modern label printing service provider with exemplary commitment to environmental protection and sustainable production - documented by certifications to ISO 14000 and EMAS. Many years of expertise in high-quality printing and design, combined with values such as a forward-looking approach and sustainability, created a brand image that was now to be reflected in the new design of its business premises, which the company opened after extensive renovations in March 2015.

The architect Pere Pujol Rosell was the key designer in the process. Maria Esteban Reche, a young professional at Metre Quadrat Studio, handled the interior design, working closely in all lighting aspects with the ERCO lighting consultants in Spain. The new facilities amount to almost 600sqm, the upper floor of the printing company serves as reception area, showroom and office. The interior and lighting are designed to meet very different usage requirements, yet based on a design concept that reflects the company and presents a unified whole despite its many contrasts.



Interior design with a dash of drama

The stage for the visitor is set with a dramatic intro: a spiral staircase in concrete dominates the foyer and takes the caller to the upper level - on its inside, the staircase is lined with a banister of black steel, the outside is delimited by a ceiling-high screen of light wood slats. This curving vertical room boundary is illuminated with the uniform light of ERCO Light Board LED recessed wallwashers. The staircase leads into a spacious reception area with lounge character. The counter and the purist built-ins are made of dark wood, there are comfortable seating arrangements and the aforesaid cabinets with product samples. Space-defining elements such as walls, floors and ceilings are kept in black and white and shades of grey. Set against this neutral backdrop, the interior concept devised by designer Maria Esteban Reche adds strong colour accents - a nod to the principles of the graphic arts industry. The reception area, for instance, is styled with colourful upholstery in yellow and magenta, as the primary colours of four-colour printing.



Panelled with wood slats, the reception area is illuminated by muted daylight, the brightness level otherwise is kept deliberately low. This gives prominence to the cabinets emphasised in brilliant light and to the accents projected elegantly by ERCO Pollux LED spotlights. Amber cove lighting along the ceiling perimeter completes the evocative lighting concept for the room. The flair of the interior designers for a dramatic sequence of spaces becomes obvious, as the visitor makes his way to the actual offices through an all but completely black corridor that holds an almost mystical appeal thanks to its illumination with LED downlights - and eventually opens out to a commodious and airy office section.

Ergonomic office lighting with LED downlights

As elsewhere, the office area is designed with surfaces of neutral colours, though here the predominant shades are the light grey and white of the floor and the back wall, which merges into an acoustic ceiling element ending a good two metres short of the outside wall. Different sections of the landscaped office are zoned by a transparent glass wall and the desks are arranged in groups of four, separated by mid-height, vertical acoustic elements. Again, the general design concept provides for a coloured accent - this time not using material colours, but backlit, angled slots in the wall and ceiling. The coloured light behind the diffuser covers is created by RGB LEDs and can be controlled as required.



Whilst using coloured “focal glow” as a design feature is great, the glare-free and exceptionally energy-efficient ambient lighting of ERCO SkimLED recessed luminaires is important in terms of ergonomics. The coloured light ceiling elements initially left limited mounting positions - a challenge which the interior designers ultimately solved by providing an appropriately sized luminaire grid that ensures adequately high levels of uniform illuminance for the workplaces without causing direct and secondary glare for the staff. The designers elected to use neutral white light at 4000K since it combines perfectly with the daylight in an office, where activating illumination with neutral and natural colour rendering is required. For the front wall of the room with its built-in cupboards the designers chose ERCO Compact LED recessed wallwashers, thereby creating optimal conditions for the vertical visual tasks at the shelves. Individual workplace lighting for each employee is added in the form of LED desk luminaires.

The redesigned premises, so the head of Gráficas Varias, are intended to promote teamwork and cooperation. Thanks to the inventive interior concept and the perception-oriented and ergonomic lighting design, this has clearly been accomplished, as has the successful positioning of the company as a design-conscious and modern service provider and employer.



About the author: Martin Krautter works as a freelance author and journalist in Offenbach am Main. After studies in industrial design at the HfG Offenbach, he was with ERCO in Lüdenscheid as head of media relations and the editorial team from 1998 to 2013. www.m-krautter.de

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