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Kasmin Gallery New York, New York, United States



Inside and out, ERCO fixtures provide diversity and flexibility for award-winning new building New York's Kasmin Gallery

- Architecture: studioMDA, New York City/USA
- Photography: Roland Halbe, Stuttgart/Germany
- Client: Kasmin Gallery, New York City/USA
- Place: New York
- Country: United States
- Website: www.kasmingallery.com

The award-winning Kasmin Gallery, the fourth art space opened by Paul Kasmin in New York's Chelsea, both promotes contemporary artists and represents some of the most influential artists of the 20th century, including Constantin Brancusi, Max Ernst and Robert Motherwell.

Designed by studioMDA and with lighting by ERCO, the purpose-built gallery needed to reflect the diversity of changing exhibits and artists in the approach to lighting the space, providing a variety of qualities from daylight through to wallwashing and highlighting.

Rhythm and flexibility

In addition to an expansive exhibition space, the new gallery also houses private viewing rooms and offices. The main exhibition area, designed for large-scale artworks, is a column-free, 3,000 square feet space with 23 feet-high walls and a polished concrete floor. The ceiling comprises 28 trapezoidal board-formed concrete coffers, each housing a large skylight that provides diffused natural daylight, augmented by the large glass store front. The super waffle structure of the ceiling grid not only creates an architectural rhythm, but also allows maximum flexibility to subdivide the space in a variety of ways.



Illuminated rooftop sculpture garden

Sitting on the skylight grid is a lush roof garden, designed by Future Green, which extends the visual plane of the adjacent High Line. It also creates a further 5,000 square feet of exhibition space, an elevated sculpture garden visible to the promenade's six million annual visitors. At night, the space, which has a changing program of artworks, is illuminated by ERCO's powerful, glare-free and discreet Gecko fixtures with 12W LED, complemented by interior light from the skylights.

Inside, the natural light during the day is diffused using film on the skylights, creating an ambient backdrop without harsh shadows. This even wash is augmented by the artificial lighting, which also had to accommodate the wide spectrum of lighting requirements demanded by changing exhibits. To offer maximum flexibility, studioMDA designed a grid lighting system using ERCO's two-circuit track and highly adaptable Light Board range with adjustable, precision optics. The grid of the ceiling forms the framework for the recessed, dimmable linear LED light strip. This provides the general lighting, while the track system has an optimal mix of Light Board spotlights and wallwashers, their rectangular design echoing the ceiling geometry.



The section illustrates the construction: a concrete grid ceiling spans the generous exhibition area without pillars. The three-dimensional shape forms both skylights and plant troughs for the roof garden.

Marriage of light and architecture

Crucially, the lighting was considered very early on in the design process. A cove in the cast-in-place concrete ceiling was designed specifically for the fixtures to sit within, allowing a seamless integration of the lighting. 'It was imperative that the lighting was embedded within the grid of the ceiling,' says studioMDA founder Markus Dochantschi. 'As with any gallery, it is critical to blend the lighting with the architecture, allowing both to fall to the background to grant precedence to the artwork.'

Different spatial experiences

The track system allows the number of fixtures to be adjusted, as well as the angle and the beam spread, so it can be tailored to the artwork exhibited. Each luminaire is individually dimmable. Due to the high ceiling in the gallery, studioMDA worked with ERCO's team to ensure that the walls were precisely lit both in terms of height and width. It was also vital that changing configurations of the exhibition walls remained perfectly illuminated whatever their position. 'As a result, different spatial experiences are guaranteed for the audience visiting each exhibition,' says Dochantschi.

Ideale Anpassungsfähigkeit für Galerien

'The specified lighting equipment provided an atmosphere to the space that was imperative for Kasmin Gallery,' he continues. 'The Light Boards were chosen to provide an even wash of light along the walls, regardless of the height of the walls. Their interchangeable lenses makes this fixture ideal for gallery applications as it allows the space to adapt to any form of artwork being shown.'

The latest in a long collaboration between Kasmin and studioMDA, the gallery design won a Jury Award in the 2019 Architizer A+ Awards.



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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