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New light from ERCO for the Ruby City Gallery in Texas, San Antonio, United States



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## **New light for Texas: ERCO wallwashing a winner in the Ruby City galleries**

- Client: Courtesy Linda Pace Foundation, Ruby City, San Antonio, Texas

- Architecture: Adjaye Associates
- Lighting design: Tillotson Design Associates
- Photography: Timothy Schenk, New York / USA
- Place: San Antonio
- Country: United States
- Website: [www.rubycity.org](http://www.rubycity.org)

**The new museum building designed by Sir David Adjaye for the Ruby City Art Centre in San Antonio, Texas, presents itself in a rich red. Almost 200 Parscan spotlights from ERCO highlight both the contemporary art and the sculptural architecture.**

He described his new building in San Antonio, built for the Linda Pace Foundation, as a “little temple of art,” and “a kind of very shy building” that is constantly hiding and revealing its face.”

David Adjaye is responsible for the architecture of the Linda Pace Foundation's art center along with his London architectural practice. The foundation goes back to Linda Pace, heiress of a Texan sauce empire, collector of contemporary art and herself an artist. Before her death in 2007, a dream allegedly bestowed upon her the vision of a red building with high towers for accommodating her collection of art. After waking up, she sketched the building and commissioned David Adjaye with the architectural interpretation of the drawing.

The construction, now inaugurated 12 years later in San Antonio, Texas, has floor space of 930 square meters. Its iridescent facade of terracotta-like concrete panels in three shades of red, developed and produced in Mexico City, is intended to ward off the heat and be simultaneously reminiscent of the loamy soil of the region.



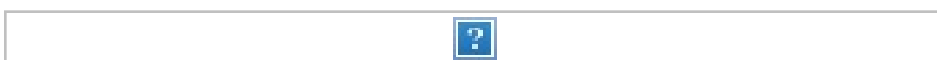
San Antonio's mayor Ron Nirenberg with Sir David Adjaye at the museum opening. In the background: Sylvie Fleury's installation "Be Amazing" (1999), which can be seen in the lobby.



Whilst the museum's design, which Linda Pace is said to have envisaged in a dream, is more reminiscent of orthodox church buildings, David Adjaye's architectural interpretation of Ruby City speaks an independent, modern language.



David Adjaye describes the Ruby City building as "restrained". Apart from the three skylights, there are only a few windows. Sloping surfaces made of the same special concrete as the facade screen off the direct daylight.



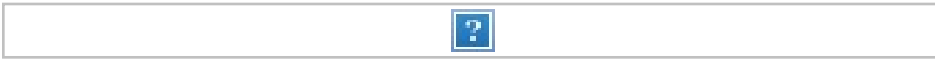
Nancy Rubin's installation "5,000 lbs. of Sonny's Airplane Parts, Linda's Place, and 550 lbs. of Tire-Wire" (1997) in the sculpture park in front of the museum.

## **Lighting concept with three levels**

Despite its rugged exterior, the building has a bright and inviting appeal on the inside despite the few windows—in accordance with the social approach of the free cultural platform. The lighting concept of the New York lighting design studio Tillotson Design, which leads organically through the building, adopts a key role. It's based on three levels: Daylight, uniform general lighting from wallwashing, and accents of light. Visitors entering the foyer of the museum from the intense Texas daylight are greeted by diffuse ambient light which emphasizes the color nuances and surface structures of the red concrete walls. Accent lighting above the reception provides orientation.



ERCO wallwashers selected from the Parscan range guide visitors via a narrow staircase to the exhibition rooms on the first floor. The wallwashing gives the canyon-like corridor a deeper appearance and offers the option of extending exhibitions into the stairwell area.



Atmospherically dense: the Tillotson Design lighting concept showcases and enhances the striking concrete architecture and at the same time provides a stage for the art.



The color red played an important role for Linda Pace—as demonstrated by her work "Red Project" from 2001. Shown: the team of the New York lighting design studio Tillotson Design during commissioning.



ERCO dimmable LED lighting tools are ideal for the exhibition area where Texan and international media art is shown. Installation ©: Isaac Julien, PLAYTIME 2014

The open exhibition spaces consist of three high galleries which seem like a fusion between factory loft and white cube. Diffuse daylight enters through one skylight in each space. The installation is complemented by 24W LED Parscan wallwashers in warm white, creating contemplative ambient lighting even at room heights of up to 4.6 meters. Accentuating light which can be simply modified according to the temporary exhibitions on view additionally highlights individual works of art. "The diversity of the Parscan spotlights with their unique interchangeable lenses gave us the flexibility we needed with a consistent form factor," said Megan Pfeiffer Trimarchi, Senior Associate at Tillotson Design. ERCO track embedded in the ceilings emphasizes the sloping nature of the latter by providing them with a discreet linear structure.



ERCO track embedded in the ceilings emphasizes the sloping, industrial hall-like ceilings of Ruby City and enables a high degree of flexibility with the staging of exhibitions. ©Linda Pace Foundation Collection



Precise ERCO light brings out the finest nuances of surfaces and contours that make up the works of young local and international artists in the Ruby City inaugural exhibition. © Installation: Cornelia Parker, Heart of Darkness, 2004



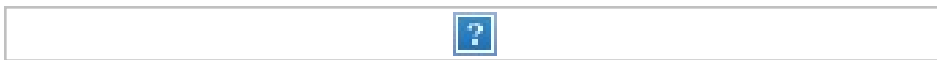
Found something for the living room? Sir David Adjaye photographs a work from the Linda Pace collection.

## **Point-precise light beams from a ceiling height of 4.6 meters**

„The complex geometry of the ceilings made even wallwashing very challenging technically, requiring several rounds of 3D calculation studies, mock-ups, and on-site focusing after installation,” stated Megan Pfeiffer Trimarchi about the challenges facing the designers.

The Tillotson Design team accurately aligned the luminaires with the help of a lifting platform. Depending on the ceiling height, spotlights were individually dimmed and the Spherolit lenses singly equipped with different light distributions according to the format of the artwork displayed. Despite the inclined high ceilings, Tillotson Design succeeded in creating uniform general lighting that is

interrupted merely by targeted accent lighting.



The lifting platform enabled the lighting designers to implement their lighting concept for Ruby City on location, despite complex ceiling geometry and room heights of up to 4.6 meters, with the utmost accuracy.

The Parscan range of spotlights met the complete spectrum of the designers' requirements for exhibition lighting at Ruby City: design flexibility due to replaceable Spherolit lenses, a consistent design, energy efficiency, durability and UV-free LED light. Around 200 ERCO lighting tools are installed in the three galleries.



The dimmable ERCO LED spotlights comply with both the briefing for energy-efficient lighting and the stringent conservation requirements for material-protecting museum lighting. The high quality of the ERCO LED optoelectronics guarantees a long service life for the luminaires—even, as intended by the lighting designers' concept, with continuous use at night. In this way, the lighting, which enables the art center to illuminate from within at night, blends the new architectural landmark with the San Antonio landscape.



The lighting concept by Tillotson Design, which specifies dimmed lighting at night, links up the art center with the Texan landscape. In this way, it communicates and reflects the collaborative, social claim of the Linda Pace Foundation.



**About the author:** Wiebke Lang is a journalist for design, architecture and branding. A graduate designer, she has been writing about the design of the world within the context of social, economic and technological developments for more than 15 years. Following a post as co-curator of the Vitra Design Museum, she worked as a freelance editor and author for trade magazines and cultural institutions. She then headed the corporate communications team at ERCO and was editor-in-chief of the specialist magazine designreport before working independently as an author, presenter and communications consultant.

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