



Art illuminated across the continents: art fairs in Hong Kong and Miami

General contractor: Expomobilia, Effretikon / Switzerland
 Lighting development: Reflexion, Zurich / Switzerland
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Prestigious art fairs in Hong Kong and Miami Beach are illuminated with a modular kit of ERCO lighting tools. A report about the challenges of lighting contemporary art across two continents.

Art Basel has been the undisputed leading fair for modern and contemporary art for decades since it was co-founded in 1970 by the legendary art dealer and collector from Basel, Ernst Beyeler. At the turn of the century the Basel fair was able to expand on this leading position in the international art market – the institution successfully expanded initially to the USA with the founding of Art Basel Miami Beach in 2002, with Art Basel Hong Kong then being launched in 2013. For all the trade fair construction and logistics management, Art Basel works with the company Expomobilia.

Two luminaire models for all fair stands

As commissioned by Expomobilia, the art fairs in Hong Kong and Miami were equipped with lighting tools from ERCO and a modular lighting concept allowing the same luminaires to be used at both locations. The complex tasks resulting from flexible lighting for various art styles and formats as well as differing architectural conditions and technical demands, were met with just two luminaire models and a single set of interchangeable lenses. Pantrac wallwashers are used for vertical lighting and Parscan spotlights for the desired light accents. Six interchangeable Spherolit lenses enable a wide spectrum of light distributions for displaying objects with widely differing dimensions in precisely the right light. The solution managed to convince both the lighting experts from the Reflexion design consultancy in Zurich – "easily the best wallwashing available on the market" – and Expomobilia as the project contractor. Pantrac wallwashers impressed on the one hand with their uniformity of asymmetric light distribution in the vertical axis and on the other with the width of the beam thereby reducing the number of luminaires resulting in an economical solution.

The start of the lighting project in Hong Kong

Works of art are very sensitive exhibition objects in several respects and demand especially careful handling by the event organiser. and the topic of lighting plays an important role in this regard. Galleries taking part in the fair not only hire the exhibition space from Art Basel but also the modular partition walls for constructing individual exhibition booths and the lighting of their fair stand. Expomobilia as the general contractor responsible for the fair construction commissioned the Reflexion lighting design consultancy from Zurich to draw up a concept for contemporary, high quality fair lighting and for evaluating suitable manufacturers.

Diverse demands: preselection of the luminaire producers

Highly different aims needed to be brought together from the very beginning; the lighting designers mainly focused on the quality of the lighting solution, whereas the fair company looked for a good price-performance ratio, simple handling and technical robustness. Setting up the art fair is allotted very little time particularly in Hong Kong so that an excessively sensitive and complex lighting system might quickly lead to problems, and the art dealers themselves wanted high quality, professional lighting that could comply with a variety of individual needs. Expomobilia decided to hold a competition for identifying the most suitable lighting supplier for such complex challenges.

Uniform wallwashing and point-based accents

Following a preselection by Reflexion, three internationally

renowned luminaire producers were invited to present their lighting solutions in the form of several sample constructions. The task consisted of illuminating a five-by-five metre fair booth constructed from three U-shaped partition walls so that pictures mounted on the walls as well as art objects positioned freely in the space were bathed with optimum light in each case. Illumination of the walls as uniformly as possible and precise accenting of the exhibition area were specified, and the consistency of light colour and quality of colour rendering were also evaluated.

The luminaire combination of Parscan and Pantrac with a set of interchangeable lenses for differing light distributions enables all lighting tasks in a gallery to be fulfilled with optimum glare control: dramatic accents emphasise individual works on a wall or in the space, whilst generously illuminated walls give the art room to breathe.

The question of light colour

The planning phase saw intensive, drawn-out discussions between the lighting designers, Expomobilia representatives and several gallery owners concerning the appropriate light colour for an art fair focusing on contemporary art.

With the aid of ERCO LED light the designers were able to prove that uniform, neutral white light offered the best possible solution. Daniel Tschudy, project manager from the Reflexion consultancy responsible for the fair at the time, concisely noted that neutral white light doesn't bear this term for nothing. "With paintings and other works of art it really makes all colours, and not just the warm tones, radiate – thereby guaranteeing optimum colour rendition. It also gets on well with the daylight flooding into the exhibition halls." The world's leading art museums and galleries have long recognised such benefits and have modified their light accordingly.

Technical challenge: a modular lighting concept for two continents

Expomobilia significantly expanded the contract even before the evaluation process for the new Art Basel Hong Kong lighting was complete. The lighting solution developed for Hong Kong was now to be adopted, although in a slightly modified form, for the Miami location. To avoid requiring two sets, both the luminaires and the complete partition walls had to be suitable for sending from one location to the next. This made complete sense and was highly economic from the point of view of the fair constructor, but caused significant problems in practice. The reason was that no luminaire producer has standard products in its portfolio that can be used simultaneously across several continents with their different power supplies and significantly differing standards and safety regulations. This created the challenge of special technical solutions for both the luminaires and accessories such as the track in order to gain UL certification. This level of complexity was justified in this case

though by the significant volume of the order.

Pantrac and Parscan for Miami and Hong Kong

This unusual challenge was taken on in Lüdenscheid, Germany where the lighting experts viewed it as a chance to prove once again the Light Factory's competence as a global company. Indeed the development division from ERCO along with the united lighting expertise of the international network managed to make its standard Pantrac and Parscan luminaires fit for cross-continental trade fair use with just minor modifications and most importantly without any losses in terms of quality of light and without needing to modify the striking external appearance of the luminaires. The new lighting solution commissioned by Expomobilia had its premiere at Art Basel in Hong Kong in spring 2016 and has now successfully established itself in Miami.



