New light for Swedish art treasures

How can daylight and modern lighting technology find harmony in historical buildings? What are the limits of illumination in the context of art? Answers can be found in the newly revamped National Museum Stockholm.

Friedrich August Stüler designed the building in 1866 to be a museum flooded with natural light. As part of the renovation, Wingårdhs Architects and Kardorff Ingenieure Lichtplanung set about rekindling this potential. "The special thing about a naturally lit museum is not just the light," says Gabriele von Kardorff, Managing Director of Kardorff Ingenieure. "It is also the revelation of the view of the historic environment while one is in a room with the treasures of the land."

Lighting mood: formative

Natural light is now falling back into some exhibition rooms through windows and glass roofs. Depending on the time of the day or the season, the light mood outside changes the visitor's experience of the museum. The most important task of art lighting is to always illuminate objects such that they acquire contours. The museum selected XAL's PABLO spotlight for this task.

Pablo Picasso's intense colouring is famous. The spotlight follows his example and illuminates the original works of art with a colour rendering index of 92, almost colourfast. In addition, the lighting combines art and architecture by using light rails whose swivelling PABLO spots are aimed at both the works and the picturesque domed ceilings.

Light-flooded atrium demands enlightenment

Visitors move through the sculpture courtyard as though under an open sky. Wingårdhs designed a spectacular glass roof and created an atrium as an exhibition space. But how can this daylight-flooded and particularly high atrium be optimally illuminated?

Kardorff Ingenieure worked with XAL experts to develop special luminaires that have flexible spots and interchangeable optics, and which illuminate the atrium from a height of almost eleven meters. The luminaires were powder-coated with a special colour so that the geometry and colour harmonise with the surrounding architecture. The minimalist installation keeps the
intervention on the historic walls as small as possible. The result is a mythical ambience that need not forego the benefits of modern technology.

THE LIGHT PLANNERS | Kardorff Ingenieure

Gabriele von Kardorff, together with her husband Volker von Kardorff, runs the Berlin lighting design office which was founded in 1997. Their big source of inspiration? "Consciously observing things". The most beautiful light mood they have experienced so far was in the Stockholm archipelago, as the sun was setting between the thousands of small islands.

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