



NOUVELLES VARIATIONS

The Carmes District in Namur, Belgium, boasts some of the best examples of Art Deco architecture in the world, a new lighting design is ensuring the 1920s style continues to seduce.

Post-war housing crises have not always been solved well. The housing gap in the UK which occurred in the wake of the Second World War was filled with tower blocks, unaesthetic slabs of flats built in haste, which aged just as quickly.

In Namur, Belgium, a housing crisis in the aftermath of the First World War was tackled in a similar manner, a major building project that created a new district of the town. Much like the British town planners in the 1950s who opted for the popular architectural style of the day, concrete dominated brutalism, the Belgium planners in the 1920s did much the same, only the dominant style of their times was Art Deco, a beloved design which remains just as popular today as it was then.

Today Namur's Carmes District is a global reference for architects and students of architecture alike, a textbook example of Art Deco and the uncluttered volumes of Modernism. The most notable streets in design terms are the rue des Carmes and the rue des Croisiers with many of the buildings designed by the trailblazers of the Art Deco and Modernist design movement Jean Deloos, Leopold Thome and Georges Nihoul. Opened between 1928 and 1931, the area is also a good example of organised town planning and an attempt to create a self contained area which offered all the necessary amenities to its residents within walking distance, so businesses are mixed with apartments, shops with cinemas and banks and covered walkways are all nearby.

Preserved unaltered, the Carmes District brings to mind all the smoke-filled heady idealism that filled Europe during the interwar years, all the hedonistic, sometimes seedy, glamour documented by Christopher Isherwood and F. Scott Fitzgerald, before the rise of Hitler in Germany and the years of crisis which followed.

It was with this heritage in mind that lighting design practice Radiance 35 approached the creation of a lighting scheme for the area, which had previously gone without any illumination scheme to highlight its considerable architectural treasures.

The principle objective of the plan was to highlight the architecture while creating a pleasant night time aura, with a focus on improving the street and building facade



Above Produced by lighting designers Radiance 35, the map shows the Namur streets chosen to benefit from the new lighting design. The pink indicates buildings that have had individual architectural features highlighted, the purple shows buildings that have had their exterior lighting entirely overhauled. The blue circles highlight adapted street lighting sources.

lighting. The designers, Isabelle Corten from Radiance 35 and David Decellier, a street lighting designer at ORES, a team which deal with concerns about public and patrimonial lighting, wished to produce a plan which improved the experience of any pedestrian walking around the district. They also planned for the building facades to act like tapestries hung in a museum, the bas-reliefs and the individual details and motifs highlighted, telling the story of Art Deco design to anyone walking the streets. Three main thoroughfares were chosen to benefit from the scheme, three streets which it was thought best represented the design of the quarter, with numerous major features such as sculptures, window frames, lines, mouldings and reliefs on show.

It was decided that 44 individual facades would be lit, with 90 LED spotlights being installed with five different beam angles. LEC Lyon designed and produced over 235 lightbars and spotlights for the project with each fixture being specially adapted in size and lighting effect to suit each individual feature on the building facades. Lightbars were manufactured in twenty different lengths from 30 to 200cm and each one was painted with a RAL colour corresponding to the colour of the facade. The bars were equipped with 164 LEDs per metre minimising the space required. The lighting had to be invisible to the eye in daylight and during the evening and it was required by law to be low power to avoid the installation of additional protec-



tive cables. Due to these limitations all the LEC products are 24V. The lighting equally had to be developed to suit the standards of local authorities and the regulations surrounding listed buildings, of which there are many in the area.

Functional street lighting was upgraded too, with the old sodium lights being replaced with metal halide which emit a white beam. "We had to gather the necessary authorisation from each resident or owner," says David Decellier, "and a project meeting was organised to present the equipment that was going to be installed."

"The ultimate adjustments were made in situ and the installation had to be completed at night and precautions taken so as not to annoy residents in the process."

Above Individual motifs are a quintessential part of Art Deco architecture and have been lit to stunning effect by specially adapted fixtures provided by LEC Lyon. 5625 Linealec LED lightbars were adapted for this purpose, supported by LEC Lyon 4010 Luminy LED spotlights and 4020 Luminy 2 LED spotlights.

These limitations were met with customised solutions. For the illumination of linear features such as mouldings and freezes accurate lighting was created and adapted to the subject. Therefore the LED lightbar 5625 Linealec, which can hold 165 LED's per square metre, was constructed in thirty different lengths ranging from 30 to 200cm and painted with an RAL colour to match the facade they had been placed on. The power cables were also directly integrated into the lightbars making them invisible to the naked eye.

Other architectural features such as columns and sculptures, which vary from building to building, were dealt with on a case by case basis, with the angles, beam widths and colour temperature of the spotlights being adapted to suit. LED spotlight 4010 Luminy and LED spotlight 4020 Luminy 2 were both used on the project, with each being adapted to suit the facade they were placed on thus creating a personalised illumination scheme for each building in the process.

"LED technology, adapted in most cases by ORES, is much more 'sober' than discharge lamps which are too powerful for projects like this, we needed a directed and accurate flux," Decellier says of the benefits of LED. "They also require less maintenance and replacing less frequently," he adds, "and this aspect is very important for Namur as the town bears the maintenance costs."

The Carmes project demonstrates the adaptability of LED to any situation and is an example of new LED lighting working not only in a historic setting, but successfully within the limitations such settings impose. Most crucially LED fixtures proved themselves to be unobtrusive after being installed for principally artistic purposes on private properties, properties which just happened to be design classics and now show their original characteristics in all their variations.

www.ores.net

www.radiance35.eu



PROJECT DETAILS

The Carmes District, Namur, Belgium

Client: Ville de Namur

Architect: Jean Delooz, Leopold Thome, Georges Nihoul

Lighting Designers: Isabelle Corten - Radiance 35 and David Decellier - ORES

LIGHTING SPECIFIED

LEC Lyon 5625 Linealec LED lightbar

LEC Lyon 4010 Luminy LED spotlight

LEC Lyon 4020 Luminy 2 LED spotlight