

lighting

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Arabian lights

A special supplement looking at the lighting market in the Middle East

Lighting Design Awards 2013

All of the winners and shortlisted entries from this year's event

The history girls

Meet the team who make the lighting decisions at English Heritage

Light breakfast

Precision Lighting hosts a breakfast discussion on revisions to LG08

The Royal treatment

In this month's Live Consultation, **Francis Pearce** listens in on a discussion between lighting and product designer Mario Nanni and Melissa Johnston of David Chipperfield Architects. The venue is Café Royal in London, which is currently undergoing renovation



Site specific Melissa Johnston (above left) and Mario Nanni (above right) on site. The light fittings in the pool area incorporate emergency lighting and a speaker (below).



Mario Nanni, lighting designer and principal of Italian lighting manufacturer Viabizzuno, has created a family of fittings for London's famous Café Royal, which has been redesigned and enlarged as a hotel and restaurant by David Chipperfield Architects, while historic restoration has been undertaken by Donald Insall Associates. Café Royal first opened in 1865, its interior heavy with mouldings, gilding and mirrors. Although elements of the lavish original have been retained, the redesign is driven by a pared-down but sympathetic aesthetic that *Financial Times*' Edwin Heathcote describes as "neither too minimal nor fussily overdetailed" – and this extends to the lighting.

From historic to modern

"The interior was developed from nine existing rooms that we were asked to retain," says David Chipperfield Architects project director Melissa Johnston. "We looked for clues in these rooms that we could use in the modern space so the modern project has the same sort of strength and richness. The issue for us is how you mediate between the old and the new."

"These existing rooms are so luxurious, so full of gold leaf and detail, we didn't want our modern spaces to feel poor. That applies to the lighting. So, for example, we had the feeling that maybe wall sconces were more interesting than recessed lighting, and that we should have an uplight like the original candle mounted to the wall and the colour rendering should reference candlelight. The aesthetic is born of what is required technically; the materiality is inspired by bronze, brass, the blackened bronze and so on."

In late February, *Lighting* joined Nanni and Johnston as they met on site to discuss the lighting in the 10-storey building's subterranean spa, which was still under construction. At that point, a sample wall light had been installed at what would be the poolside and Nanni's team was testing it in situ. "The cabling has all been run in and we are looking at the output, the colour temperature and the overall effect in the pool hall," said Johnston. "Mocking up the lighting for the spa is the last part of the design process. We couldn't imagine doing it any other way."

Functional fittings

Through an interpreter, Nanni explained that "this is my way of working. Especially with new products, you have to see them in reality and see how they work. These fittings are designed specifically for Café Royal. Some may become product lines but others will remain special items just for here. This is

Viabizzuno's history. The purpose is not just to design product lines. At the moment, I have about 3,000 products and around 90 per cent of them were designed for specific needs or projects, working together with architects or lighting designers".

The Royal family of luminaires shares common features – namely a hidden source and a conical metal reflector to create indirect light. There are some 260 wall-mounted Royal paretas in the public areas and spa but the spa luminaire's elongated design also includes an acoustic speaker hidden in the base to keep the area free of visual clutter.

"This is the only light source in the pool area because the client didn't want overhead light," Johnston says. "It is a very hard-working little fitting. It is doing four jobs: providing indirect white light, with the possibility of coloured lighting in case the pool area is used for events, plus it's a speaker and acts as emergency lighting."

The right light

The spa will have 30 luminaires with 9W RGB and 6W white LEDs with a colour temperature of 3,700K. Elsewhere, there are 500 of Viabizzuno's ceiling-mounted Plafone luminaires, 40 Sospensione suspended fittings, 190 floor-standing Piantana uplights, 1,320 recessed ceiling lights and 34 chandeliers in ten different sizes. The fittings are in a variety of finishes, depending on context, with brass used in the historical areas.

As Nanni explains: "in the historical areas with paintings and gold finishes or wood it was essential to have warm, dimmable, candle-like lighting. In general, the hotel is illuminated using halogen because we wanted to keep the 2,700K colour temperature. It was important to find a compromise between the quality of light, architecture, restoration of the old building and keeping the cost down. There are common areas where the lighting is achieved using LEDs because the lights have to be on all the time. And here in the spa we are using LEDs for the emergency lighting and a cool white light. The pool area is peculiar because you might want exhibitions or shows and the client might need a more 'cinematic' light".

Johnston says "because it is such a big and complicated product we were often asked to value engineer; Mario was very good at doing this without losing the aesthetics. It speaks of our relationship that he always understands what a priority is for us".

"In the historical areas with paintings or wood it was essential to have warm, dimmable, candle-like lighting"



Photos: Duncan Lawson

Old and new
Brass fittings were used to marry the modern with the historic

LIGHT FEELING

Designing site-specific lighting demands more than purely technical skills, according to Mario Nanni. "The inspiration, the light fittings are borne from meetings with the architects but these meetings are also a chance for you to hear what the building tells you," he says.

"A lighting designer has to be very good at listening to the place, to the building he is working in, and being humble. It's not just an opportunity to show off.

"There has been a long process of development here due to the research we had to undertake into materials to achieve very specific finishes. The process is like couture dress design. The crucial thing is to keep that craftsmanship as well as the technology and skills."

Johnstone adds: "That is the magic that Mario adds for us. We have a very restrained, understated, timeless, classic, modern aesthetic. Mario brings the technology that makes it very current and relevant but without making it technical."

Past times The subtle, warm lighting in the coffee shop successfully creates a sense of luxurious decadence

