

iGuzzini illuminates the Pietà in St. Peter's Basilica

Four different lighting scenes to enhance Michelangelo's sculptural masterpiece

Rome, 30th October 2018 - The Fabric of Saint Peter chose iGuzzini to supply the lighting of one of the most famous artworks in the world, housed in the Chapel of the Crucifix in St. Peter's Basilica: Michelangelo's Pietà. The new lighting system, designed by the Milan-based studio Rossi Bianchi Lighting Design, replaced the previous lighting installation to enhance visitors' experience of this renaissance masterpiece through innovative solutions based on recent technological developments in the field of LED lighting.

"All the know-how we have gained since the 1990s when we lit the Bernini and Canova sculptures in the Galleria Borghese has been put at the service of the Fabric of Saint Peter in order to enhance Michelangelo's Pietà - one of the most evocative masterpieces in art history - through the use of light," commented Adolfo Guzzini, President of iGuzzini illuminazione. "iGuzzini has always put its lighting culture in the service of the universal value of beauty, to benefit people in Italy and around the world. Today, at St. Peter's too, sculptural art is revived through our skill in balancing lighting levels to emphasise the plasticity of the sculpture and create a perfectly lit effect on the marble, as described by Giulio Carlo Argan in relation to the Canova exhibition in Rome which we illuminated."

In addition to replacing the previous luminaires with new latest-generation LED spotlights, the new lighting project also stands out through the use of four different lighting scenarios which can be called on simply and intuitively to accommodate different visual activities and requirements. The individual scenes are created using compact solutions that take up minimal space and feature warm white tones (3000K) and high colour rendering levels meant to enhance the contours of the artwork and the shine of the marble. The overall aim is to create a consistent view of the entire work, so that all visitors can see and appreciate every detail of this unique masterpiece.

"The new lighting system, which has also been improved from a scientific point of view, allows Michelangelo's masterpiece to be better appreciated and its universal value to be better understood" declared the Most Reverend Cardinal Angelo Comastri. "The Pietà, in fact, is Michelangelo's faith sculpted in marble, as Virgin Mary's youthful face is a highly contemporary message from the artist showing how avoiding sin is the only way to be truly beautiful and eternally young."

Thanks to the DALI control system, the light fittings are divided into groups that can be switched on separately and adjusted in terms of light intensity, allowing the system to create different lighting scenes, which, to clarify their purpose, have been named as follows: 'North Scene – Sculpture Focus', 'East Scene – Grazing Light', 'South Scene – Full Light' and 'West Scene - Daily'.

North Scene - sculpture focus

In this scene the lighting is ideal for a close-up view of the sculpture that underlines its artistic value and enhances the visitors' experience. Light is focused on the sculpture through Palco spotlights mounted on tracks that run on either side of the pilasters, whereas the illumination for the floor, ceiling and backdrop is reduced to a minimum. This scene features no clear directionality. The chiaroscuro effects are balanced to enhance the sculpture's plasticity and allows transiting visitors to appreciate both individual details and the incredible overall harmony of the artwork.



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East Scene – grazing light

From the capital on the east side, this scene illuminates the Pietà with a spectacular beam of light. The incidence angle is clear and there is a sharp contrast with the surrounding shadow. The subdued lighting of the vaults and backdrop creates a frame around the sculpture and vibrant reflections which enhance the glow of its marble to create a powerful visual effect with a strong emotional impact. The scene is created by crisscrossing the light beams with different dimming levels produced by the frontal Palco spotlights, while leaving the vaults and floor almost completely obscured.

South Scene – full light

All the luminaires are switched on in this scene. This means the sculpture is absolutely dazzling and becomes a source of light in itself. The vaults and floor are lit slightly less intensely as the focus should be on the beam of light that illuminates the sculpture. Compared to the previous scenes, the lighting of the central vault, arches and lateral vaults is more sustained. Frontal Palco spotlights also add to the grazing light effect.

West Scene – daily

This lighting scene is designed to enhance the visitor experience at St. Peter's Basilica where the Pietà is viewed through a glass screen. This is why the lighting is frontal and created by the Palco projectors installed in groups of three on the pillars. The light beams are criss crossed at symmetrical angles to highlight the sculpture's plasticity. The central vault is lit evenly, whereas the arches and lateral barrel vaults are illuminated with a homogeneous, slightly less intense light, thanks to the combined use of Palco spotlights and linear Underscore lighting.

About iGuzzini

Established in 1959, iGuzzini Illuminazione is a leading international group that operates in the architectural lighting sector with approximately 1,500 employees. The company is dedicated to researching, designing and producing indoor and outdoor lighting systems in collaboration with the best lighting designers, architects, planners and research centres around the world. Based in Recanati, in the Marche region of Italy, iGuzzini is active in over 20 countries spread across 5 continents. The company's main focus is to use light in cultural, work, retail, urban, infrastructure and hospitality & living contexts to improve the relationship between humans and the environment through its research, manufacturing, technology and knowhow. In 2017, the company's consolidated revenue reached € 232.3 million, recording a 26% increase over the last 5 years. For more information please visit the iGuzzini website: www.iguzzini.com

About Rossi Bianchi lighting design

Rossi Bianchi lighting design studio focuses on both interior and exterior lighting design for public and private projects. Since 2006, Nicoletta Rossi and Guido Bianchi, both architects with over 15 year experience in working with lighting manufacturers and design agencies, decided to start their own practice to develop the ultimate in innovation and research criteria in the field of lighting. Unlike the traditional approach of a "correct" lighting design based on efficiency and visual comfort, the intent is to investigate all the dimensions involved in a lighting experience in order to achieve an evocative and emotional response through light.

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