

Guerrilla attack

BY ELLEN LAMPERT-GRÉAUX

When it comes to lighting there is nothing as important as location, location, location! Especially for the site-specific guerrilla lighting projects masterminded by Paul Gregory of Focus Lighting in New York City and Jonathan Speirs of the UK-based Lighting Architects Group in London and Edinburgh. After a successful guerrilla-style project in Bochum, Germany, in 1999, Gregory and Speirs recently completed a second such exploit this spring at Texas Christian University (TCU) in Fort Worth.

The two were invited by Fred Oberkircher, director of TCU's Center of Lighting Education, as designers-in-residence for a week to teach a lighting course to a class of interior design students. Rather than stick to a traditional lecture format, they opted for the hands-on, guerrilla approach of lighting a building with half a million dollars' worth of equipment from companies such as Articulight, Christie Lites, Columbia Lighting, Drama Lighting, ETC, High End Systems, Light Bulb Solutions, Rosco, Ruud Lighting, Samarco, Space Cannon, and Strand Lighting. The list includes over 200 fixtures, four control desks, and one mile of cable.

The backdrop for this project was TCU's Moudy Building. "A large building with an atrium, this was a good canvas with lots of architectural variety, from columns and concrete to the walls, trees, and glazing of the glass ceiling," says Speirs, who admits that this project was more planned than an event in which one would pick out a building, move in quickly to light it, and move on before the police came. "We'll do that somewhere, sometime," he insists.

"What was great about this project was working with a group of young students with no preconceived ideas," Speirs adds, describing one of the concepts the students came up with for lighting a tree, using gobos and colors to show its cycle throughout the year, from blossoms in the spring to a hot summer, and on to a wintry snow scene. "The goal is to walk around an existing building and see what you see," he notes. "What can you do to make it interesting and capture the public's attention?"

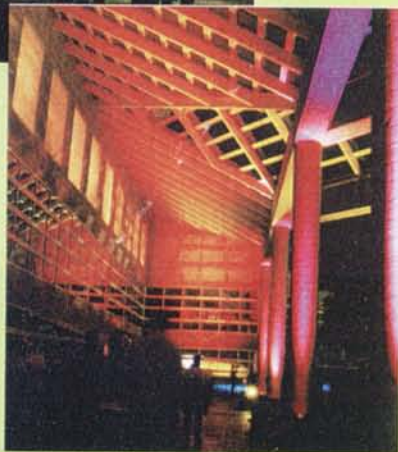
For Gregory, the exercise teaches the students what they need to mock up and test before committing their ideas to paper. "They carried the lights, lamped and gelled them, and hauled the cable, staying up until two o'clock in the morning," he explains. "They wanted to uplight the columns but didn't know if the lights should be 4" away or 6", so they kept moving them around."

How does this translate into the real world? "You need to decide where the lights go before they put in the heating and air-conditioning slots," says Gregory, noting that mock-ups help solve design problems. "The students wanted to streak the walls with light, but found it was better to hit them with a nice angle 15' back, and had to move everything."

Another good backdrop for the lighting was the metal mullions of the glass ceiling. "You can light them like the folds of a grand drape, with hot from one side and cool from the other. If you use red and blue, you get magenta in the middle," notes Gregory. "It looked fabulous."

Programming assistance came from Bobby Harrell on the Strand 520 console, with support from Bill Belleveau for the ETC Irideon AR500 fixtures. The project included four weekday nights of set-up and the final one-night "show" on Friday, April 6.

Speirs himself created a "hairy" facade by lighting a leafless vine with ETC Source Fours in white against a wall washed with color from the AR500s. "We wanted to show the students how you look at things you don't normally see. They had a lot of time to experiment."



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