

Seeing an Alternate NY in the Best Light



Amerlux's SPEQ Track Heads Help Queens Museum Overcome Lighting Challenges for "Never Built New York" Exhibit

New York City—the bustling city of bright lights, masses of people and more than one million buildings in all sizes and styles—has a particularly iconic skyline.

But what about the city that might have been—the “never built” projects in New York that would have transformed the city and the lives of past and future generations?

“The pieces in the show had a wide variety of light level requirements and we were able to have the show we wanted because of the SPEQ lights. We didn't have to organize the exhibit with all the low-lit items together and we hadn't had that control before.”

— **Larissa Harris**, Curator for the Queens Museum and in-house coordinator for “Never Built New York” exhibit

That was the question “Never Built New York” explored. Hosted by the Queens Museum in Flushing Meadows, New York from September 2017 – February 2018, the distinctive exhibit examined what the city could have looked like and the city's goals, strengths and challenges during the past 175 years.



Co-curated by architecture critics Sam Lubell and Greg Goldin, designed by Christian Wassmann, and illuminated throughout its main gallery by leading lighting fixture manufacturer Amerlux, "Never Built" invited visitors to discover the alternative paths New York City might have taken, as reflected by 230 original



architectural models, plans, drawings and even a Frank Lloyd Wright sketch on a napkin.

Proposals in this "alternative city" during the years included several airports clustered around Manhattan (one being a "rotary" airport that could turn as needed), elevated freeways running through lower Manhattan, a series of skyscrapers buttressing those freeways that could enable residents to live right off the highway, and a variety of

monuments, residential towers, and office buildings that did not get constructed for various reasons.

"One of our galleries, the Rubin Gallery, is a long, narrow space which happens to be the same shape as Manhattan," said Larissa Harris, a curator at the Queens Museum and the in-house coordinator for the exhibit. "Our designer decided to organize the objects geographically by location, from the Battery (in lower Manhattan) through uptown Manhattan, with the other boroughs represented to the north and east as needed."

While leveraging the Rubin Gallery's unique shape made great sense for the exhibit, the space presented a number of technical challenges for the museum's staff to overcome: long and narrow, its curved walls are painted black and dark grey carpet covers the floor. To add a level of difficulty, the room has a very high barrel-vaulted ceiling, extending 30-feet above the floor on the low end and reaching to a height of 40-feet on the other end of the room.

An Artistic Engineered Solution

Enter Amerlux with its new SPEQ line of highly-efficient LED track lights. Amerlux donated several dozen of the Large 48-watt LED lights and 600-feet of accompanying track, ultimately providing a system that balances a clean, minimal aesthetic design with industry-leading optical performance.

The 48-watt SPEQ Large lights delivers 3,977 lumens and 46,856 CBCP. SPEQ also comes in Medium (26-watts; 2,056 lumens; 14,898 CBCP) and Small (15-watts; 1,310



lumens; 9,393 CBCP) models. All SPEQ lights offer a full gamut chip as an alternative to the standard high CRI chip, delivering full saturation of color and clean, crisp whites.

The outdated lights, which SPEQ replaced, were 24-year-old, 300-watt halogen track lights. These old lights were becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to maintain and they could not adequately illuminate the space. "Each halogen bulb cost us \$15 and they lasted for a month and a half to two months," said Arnold Kanarvogel, facility manager for the Queens Museum. "The lights were constantly breaking and, because they went out of production 15 years ago, parts were not available. We actually had to 3-D print one of the components to keep the old lights operating."

The "Never Built New York" exhibit would not have worked in the space without the SPEQ lighting.

"The exhibition was so packed with displays that we couldn't even get our scissor lift in there, so we would not have been able to change the bulbs in the old lights," Kanarvogel said.

Extremely energy efficient, the SPEQ lighting offered another advantage to Kanarvogel's team:



Because the old lights drew so much power, the museum was limited in how many lights could be utilized in any one place. “We could never put more than four lights in an area, even if an exhibit needed more spotlights—we did not have the power in the lighting tracks to put more cans there,” Kanarvogel said. “With the new lights and track, we can load up five or six cans together and not worry about popping a breaker.”

Ultimately, the museum ended up using 15 48-watt SPEQ lights to beautifully light up the gallery where before, 25 300-watt lights struggled to insufficiently light the gallery and consumed more than 10-times the power. Besides the significant energy savings this gives the museum, the SPEQ lights also provide substantial maintenance savings.

contribution to the whole exhibit experience.

“Our new Amerlux LED track lights deliver lighting that allows visitors to pay attention in an extremely complex visual environment,” Harris said. “Not too dark or too white, the lighting makes the space truly feel like a museum and helps create an environment for contemplation, allowing individuals to spend time looking at all of the detail presented in a comfortable manner. Thanks to the black color of the walls, the works just pop off the wall—but the lighting is mellow enough that visitors can stay as long as they need to take the exhibit in.”

Since displays were grouped geographically around the gallery, delicate historical items requiring low light were next to modern reproductions that

It’s an effect that other team members confirm. “In celebration of this inspiring exhibit, it was important for us to work with the right quality and balance of lighting. We wanted visitors to experience these never-before-seen drawings and models from a new perspective,” said Bevin Savage Yamazaki, senior associate at Gensler, the global architecture firm that helped realize the exhibition and connect the Queens Museum with Amerlux.

The lights Amerlux donated will remain in the space to illuminate future exhibits at the Queens Museum. “We have upcoming exhibits in the Rubin Gallery that would have been very difficult with our old lights,” Harris said. “One exhibit will have prints and videos next to each other, which is a challenge because the prints need bright light so people can see them, while the video screens need dim light. We’ve struggled with keeping exhibits lit so people can see them. This is a whole different ball game now.”

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“They require less manpower hours to maintain them,” Kanarvogel said. “No more changing bulbs every other month. Now, it’s just a switch to turn on and off. The new lights will last us for a minimum of 10 years without problems.”

Following the installation of Amerlux’s 48-watt SPEQ LED track heads, which feature a sleek, slim cylinder design with high beam control, the team couldn’t be happier with their new lighting’s look, feel, performance, and

could be lit brightly. “The show was a crazy combination of light requirements,” Harris said. The SPEQ lights gave the curatorial staff the freedom to organize the exhibit in a way that made sense artistically, rather than being forced to group works together by lighting needs. “We’ve never had that kind of control before. Our old lights were big chunky cans, which we would have to physically remove to darken an area,” she said.



PROJECT SUMMARY

End User

The Queens Museum, New York City, N.Y.

Project Scope

Upgrade 25 300-watt halogen lights in the Queens Museum's Rubín Gallery with several dozen 48-watt Amerlux SPEQ LED track heads and 600 feet of accompanying track in 2017.

Upgrade Benefits

- The museum was able to beautifully light an exceptionally challenging gallery space with curved 40-foot ceilings and black walls.
- The 48-watt SPEQ LEDs reduced power usage by 10-fold for the museum.
- SPEQ track heads are easily moved, angled, directed, and dimmed and the extraordinary flexibility allowed the museum to light delicate works very low and arrange them next to more brightly-lit works.
- The SPEQ lamps' 50,000-hour rated life will deliver years of maintenance-free operation.
- SPEQ track heads were a unique solution for upgrading the museum's high-ceiling gallery spaces and providing beautiful and appropriately-toned light for exhibits.

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