

Picturesque

Vincent Van Gogh Foundation renovates mansion in Arles/F to create a modern art gallery dedicated to van Gogh.

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Photos: Hervé Hôte, Fluor Architecture, Wonderfulight

Light and painting are closely linked. And yet museum or gallery design and lighting design sometimes do not appear to correlate. This does not apply to the museum renovated by the Vincent Van Gogh Foundation in Arles/F, where even some of the lighting effects look as if they were painted.



The view of the roof above the gift shop is a true work of art. The surroundings and the effects generated through the reflective quality of the glass merge into one, picturesque and highly relevant to modern architecture and the lighting world.



- Key
- 1 – Courtyard
 - 2 – Glass art piece
 - 3 – Shop
 - 4 – Reception and ticket office
 - 5 – Hallway
 - 6 – WC
 - 7 – Roof terrace
 - 8 – Terrace
 - 9 – Large exhibition hall
 - 10 – Arcade
 - 11 – Building services
 - 12 – Administration
 - 13 – Office
 - 14 – Foyer
 - 15 – Anteroom atrium
 - 16 – Atrium
 - 17 – Salle de la liberté



Elevation and section.

The art of painting is a serious matter. This is particularly true of grand masters such as Rembrandt or Caravaggio, whose works were indeed exceedingly dark, if not gloomy. But when you take a Post-Impressionist painter such as Vincent Willem van Gogh, you quickly fathom that at a specific point in time darkness and gloom were replaced by the abundant use of colour. That did not make painting any less serious, but a little easier to digest maybe. The attempt to depict this with light in a building dedicated to van Gogh is no small challenge. To manage this task with obvious brilliance is maybe also an art. Especially when you consider the technical and energy efficiency requirements that lighting design is expected to meet today – demands whose complexity is increasing on a practically daily basis.

In spring 2014, after significant renovation work, the Vincent Van Gogh Arles foundation re-opened its doors in the Hotel Léautaud de Donines buildings. The goal of the foundation is to celebrate the value of van Gogh's artistic heritage and explore the echo of his work in the contemporary art through temporary exhibitions. The lighting designers commissioned for this project consulted with the architects to find suitable design solutions for specific areas such as the exhibitions spaces and public zones such as corridors, stairs, the patio and the gift shop.

The renovated Léautaud de Donines mansion is indeed a highly original artistic project: it summons the genius of van Gogh through the works of twentieth and twenty-first century artists, but in an historic location in the heart of an area frequently painted by the master and listed as a Unesco World Heritage Site. The mansion was built in the fifteenth century and has been owned by the

Bank of France since 1924. The building has 2,400 square metres of useable floor space and the designers were required to meet technical specifications as laid down by the most prestigious of museums. This was achieved with the support of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, which consulted and assisted the general contractor on issues of security, safety and conservation. Besides meeting these requirements, the renovation and extension also needed to consider another major characteristic of the region: the particular light of Arles, which was so dear to van Gogh.

The architectural project tapped into the core of the Foundation's artistic mission: to create exchange. Starting with the conversations between van Gogh – absent from the collection, but the light and the site of Arles make him the vector – and the artists involved. The latter includes those whose work forms part of the collection, those invited to exhibit, and those artists who have created works in harmony with the building: Bertrand Lavier with his sliding entrance wall, Raphael Hefti with his coloured glass sculpture on the roof of the bookshop, and Fritz Hauser, who created the stairwell.

Natural daylight, the famous light of Arles, was key in determining the reorganisation of exhibition volumes and space (1000 square metres), designed paying rigorous attention to conservation requirements. The colourful projections on the immaculate walls of the reception area and the gift shop, generated thanks to an extension of the glass above the entrance in the courtyard, form part of the visitor's experience.

When you enter the courtyard of the Foundation, the first volume you see is an extension created by the archi-

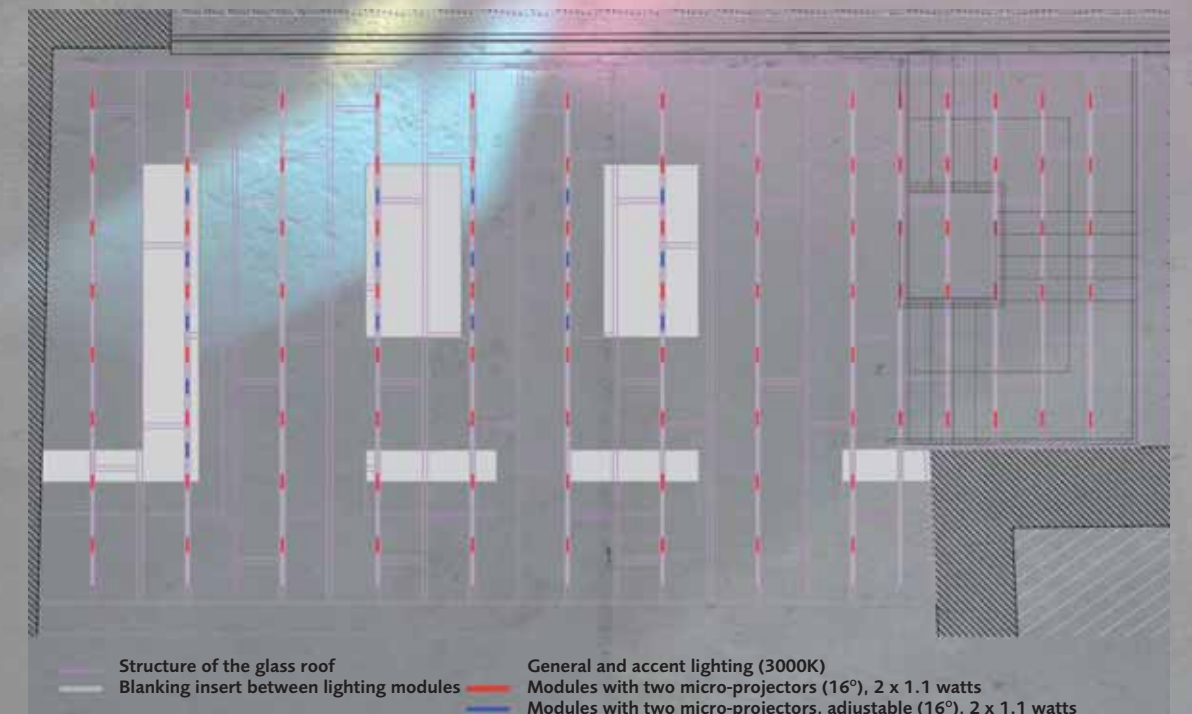
View of the entrance and the gift shop. The interior lighting is discreet and inconspicuous, allowing the entrance to take the leading role.

The gift shop interior requires no more than daylight, even during the darker hours of the day. The incident sunlight gives rise to an unending array of dynamic lighting effects traced softly over the walls as the sunlight is deflected by the glass elements on the roof.





The artificial lighting is integrated discreetly into the glass roof structure. LEDs make this solution possible.



jects to accommodate the entrance and the shop. On the top of this elegant glass volume, the coloured glass art piece by Swiss artist Raphael Hefti plays with the wonderful daylight from the sky above Arles.

Slimline (two centimetres wide) metal structures support the glass roof so the art piece can be easily perceived from the shop. The lighting designers came up with a very discreet solution to light the four to 4.6 metre high shop space. The ambient and commercial lighting is realised using micro-projector modules mounted beneath the glass roof structure. These modules are usually used to light showcases, but using the 16-degree beam angle version it is possible to light the whole space and, thanks to the adjustable versions, even achieve some accent lighting on the shop counters. The small-dimensioned projectors are practically imperceptible by day under the glass roof structure and at night they create a kind of contemporary starry sky, an indirect tribute to van Gogh's "Starry night on the Rhône", painted by the artist in Arles. To provide 150 lux on the ground and 300 lux

on the tables in the 95 square-metre space, a total of 114 2 x 1.1 watt luminaires have been applied (2.63W/m²).

Skyline openings in the large exhibition hall are aligned to a structure built on the rooftop terrace: 20 shed roof sections arranged in five rows of three, each oriented according to the path of the sun.

In the exhibition spaces, the ambient lighting and scenographic lighting were designed to complement each other in a coherent way, taking into consideration the flexibility required when setting up art showcases and wall paintings for future temporary exhibitions.

In the main exhibition room, where the nature, size and location of the art pieces can vary substantially, the lighting layout has been adapted to respond to numerous potential locations and constellations. A series of recessed tracks have been installed to enable the flexible positioning of LED projectors to highlight any surface.

Pure diffuse lines of light provide the ambient lighting, which can be flexibly switched during art exhibitions, as required. The dimmable lines of light are semi-recessed

Commissioned by the Foundation's Artistic Director Bice Curiger, Swiss artist Raphael Hefti delivered a new instalment in his continued work on the reflection/non-reflection of glass. Weaving a close dialogue not only with the architecture but also with new technologies, he has used one of his preferred mediums, dichroic glass, playing with the opacity and transparency offered by the different layers of oxides.

Purposefully arranged on the roof of the gift shop and lobby, itself made of glass, the 78 glass plates with varying degrees of opacity and reflectivity project patches of coloured light, like a disassembled kaleidoscope, that dance on the walls and in the courtyard, following the path of the sun. By absorbing ultraviolet rays, they also help maintain a temperate climate inside the space.



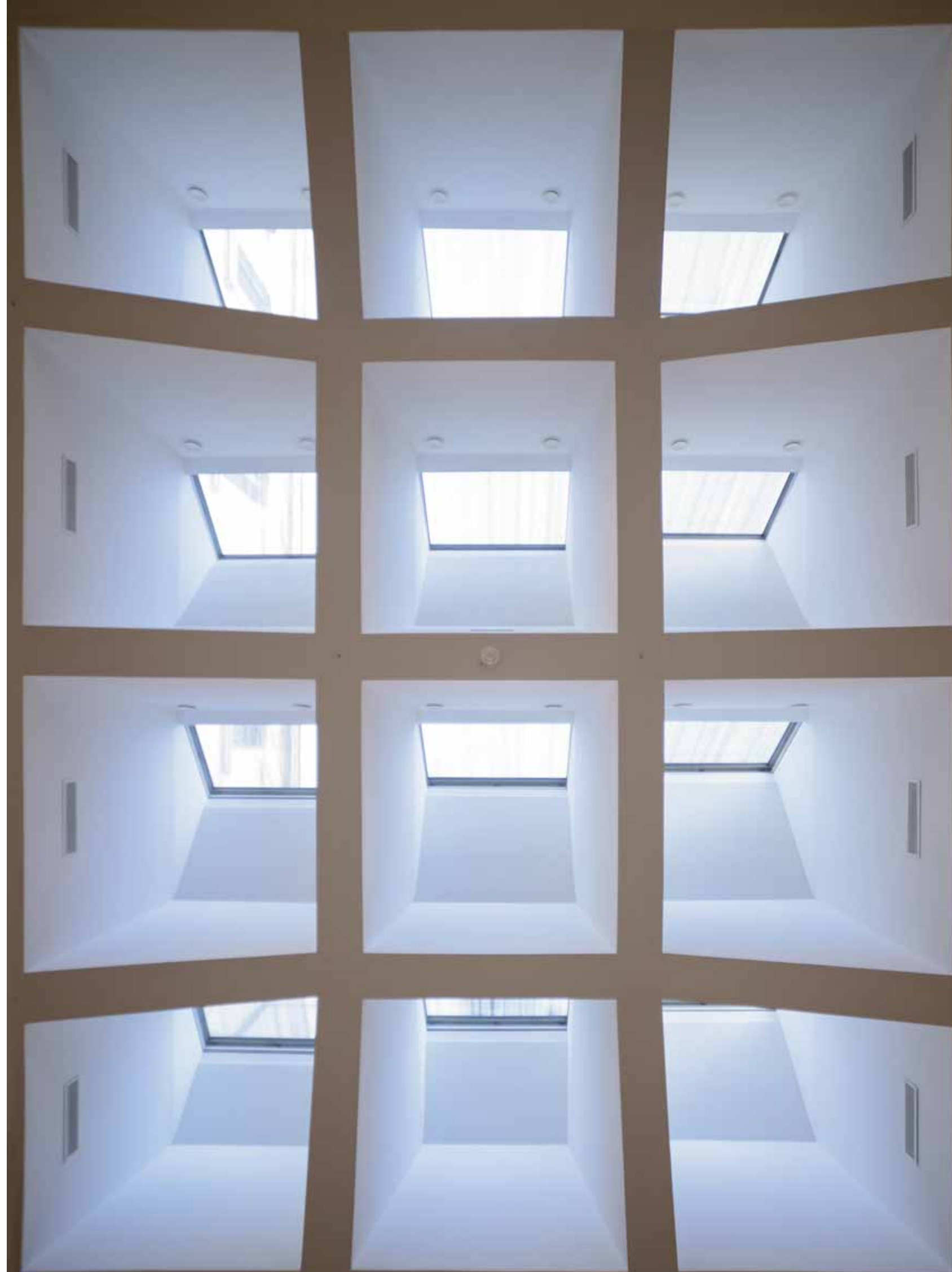
The large exhibition hall is daylit, the atmosphere changing dynamically over the course of the day. The skylight openings fill the space with diffuse indirect daylight. People can sit directly beneath them.



in the ceiling and are between 2.4 to 5.94 metres long. In the central part of the space, where the shed roofs provide natural light during the daytime, artificial light has been integrated into the skylights to provide ambient lighting and to reveal their shape.

In the central patio, a "Piranesian" space that connects all floors via the elevator, the ambient light has been integrated into the underside of the metallic grid footbridges. By integrating fluorescent battens directed downwards on the underside of the bridge, the sobriety of the architectural forms is preserved while the lighting generates moiré effects on the metal grids. Recessed lighting track has been incorporated into the edge of the underside of every footbridge in case art pieces are to be exhibited in the patio.

The renovation of the Léautaud de Donines buildings has created a "generous space open to all forms of influences and exchanges that consciously take part in a form of timelessness". The design is forged from the concept of combination, resulting in a series of diverse spaces, accommodating the needs of contemporary works of art and the conservation requirements laid down by museums, recomposing historical elements and inventing new forms, and providing many opportunities for reflection – in every sense of the word.





The historic mansion has maintained its original atmosphere, which features dark wood flooring and furnishings. Only the artificial lighting has been modernised.



Project team:

Client: Fondation Vincent Van Gogh d'Arles

Architects : Fluor Architecture

Lighting design: Wonderfulight

Daylight consultants: Ingelux Consultants

Products applied:

Micro-projectors in the gift shop, Zumtobel

Track-mounted LED projectors in main exhibition hall, Erco

Semi-recessed lines of light, XAL

Batten luminaires integrated into the skylights, Zumtobel