

Lighting Design + Application
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Fashion in the Limelight

Essentially, presentation and quality are the most important elements when it comes to fashion. However, in an ever-changing world, more designers look to light to enhance both the presentation and the perceived quality of the merchandise.

The CFDA (Council of Fashion Designers of America), the organization that coordinated the The 7th on Sixth Fashion Shows in Bryant Park, New York, commissioned Levy Lighting to contribute to its new lobby appearance. For this year's event — The 7th on Sixth/Mercedes Benz Fashion Week — Levy Lighting, Inc., designed custom architectural style fixtures to illuminate 8 ft diameter stretched Spandex™ disks which were provided by Reid Dalland and designed by A-Form Architecture.

The design team used 1,500 W incandescent light sources in a custom box enclosure to illuminate each of the disks in the lobby. Knowing there were a number of challenges associated with lighting the disks, the crew of Levy Lighting, Inc. thought hard as to how to illuminate disks, while keeping the disks in a comfortable, warm and inviting setting.

"Our approach was to keep the disks as close to the light source as possible without having too much of a hot spot," said Ira Levy of Levy Lighting, Inc. "The roof tent had a pretty steep angle, so the disks that were not close to the peak began to make the area seem smaller if they were hung too far from the light source. We also needed to make sure the light level in the lobby was bright enough for someone to read a newspaper or a magazine."



PHOTOS: MICHAEL ANTON

Lighting levels were also changed from day to night, so dimming was essential. The system was programmed with specific levels for cocktail parties and other pre-show gatherings, which took place during the course of the fashion week. All lighting luminaires, including Altman Shakespeare and Altman Star-PARs, were hung off existing tent architecture hanging hardware. The color temperature of the 1,500 W luminaires was 2700K and the color temperature on the Altman equipment was 3200K. The Lekos and PARs were used to highlight sponsor signage and installation.

As a primary sponsor, Mercedes Benz also had its own view of how the areas should be lighted. The Mercedes Benz area was similar to both a trade show booth and a museum installation, all in one package, and included an array of Mercedes Benz automobiles on display.

"The first point of concentration was to make sure the cars were lighted properly in a flattering, yet functional matter," Levy said. "While the color change and the movement were important, we could not sacrifice the primary objective of the installation, which was to display product."

By utilizing an array of Altman Television Studio Fresnels, the cars were illuminated in white light. Since the crew did not want to ruin clean installation throughout the rest of the lobby by hanging truss, the team had to work with the existing architecture to find hang points for the equipment. At the same time, there were heating tubes to contend with, which could melt if the equipment was hung too close. Within the parameters, the fresnels worked perfectly.

In order to compensate for the different distances of the luminaires, the crew utilized the flood/spot control on the back of the fixtures. The units that were further away were set to spot, while the ones hung closer were set to flood.

The control allowed the team to get even light levels wherever it was desired. At the same time, the crew was able to make some areas brighter than others, so the cars would shine in certain areas. Altman PARs were added to the equation to create a multiple channel chase in different colors. Some of the colored light was focused directly onto the cars and some of it was built into the set-piece. The colored light reacted well to the silver color of the vehicles, while the lighting in the set helped to emphasize movement during the crossfades.

—John-Michael Kobes

P H O T O N S

NOTES ON LIGHTING DESIGN