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advancement of solid-state lighting in the built environment

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Architectural SSL magazine is focused on the development, application, specification and design merit of LEDs and solid-state lighting throughout the built environment.

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**MAGAZINE > Recent Projects****Cooper Square Hotel, New York City**

Owner: Matthew Moss and Klaus Ortlieb
Architect of Record: Perkins Eastman
Interior Architect: Antonio Citterio
Exterior Architect: Carlos Zapata
Lighting Design: Focus Lighting

**The Challenge:**

Create an atmosphere for the Cooper Square Hotel that was dark and intimate, yet illuminated key architectural components to showcase a sense of refinement and luxury.

The Solution:

Focus Lighting employed linear LED solutions that backlit or edge-lighted materials or glowing elements embedded into millwork, thereby creating a warm and inviting environment that is more flattering to patrons.

The Cooper Square Hotel, designed by Carlos Zapata with interiors by Milan designer Antonio Citterio, opened in June 2009 on the Bowery in New York City. The 11,500-sq.-ft. building, with its 21-story tower holding 145 rooms, is one of Manhattan's newest boutique hotels—luxurious, contemporary and cosmopolitan.

New York lighting design firm Focus Lighting had significant experience lighting some of the city's most exciting luxury hotels. Its principal, Paul Gregory, met with the owner and operations team at the architect's office, explained what they could contribute to the project, and quickly became entrusted to illuminate the hotel. "The challenge we encountered was that the designers and owner/operator team wanted to create a space that was very dark and intimate, but still felt luxurious and refined," says Gregory. "We needed to highlight the unique architecture and produce a warm, yet mysterious, ambiance without creating an environment that was overly lit for the tastes and sensibilities of the sophisticated clientele."

In many public areas of the hotel, there is little to no downlighting, a technique often used to create visual interest and a sense of intimacy. Instead, the lighting designers incorporated backlit or edge-lighted materials or glowing elements embedded into millwork, thereby creating a warm and inviting environment. The concept required the seamless integration of lighting with architecture and a light source that could provide the right color, controllability, diminutive size and long service life.

In the main lobby, for example, softly glowing sheer curtains divide the space into an intimate seating area. Two walls of dark wood, accented by slots of light, provide a sense of contrast with the diaphanous design. Glowing millwork and pools of light guide guests along two bars to the restaurant featuring signature Citterio decorative pieces.

In this space, LED lighting was chosen to create luminous elements in a series of open niches in the millwork. By working onsite with B&B Italia, which built all of the custom millwork for the project, the lighting designers were able to achieve a high level of finish with the lighting details that makes the hotel feel very refined.

"The LEDs we used were mostly linear products that were warm—3000K or less—and it was very important that they dim smoothly, so we could achieve the low levels of illumination we were looking for," says Christine Hope, project lighting designer for Focus Lighting. "So much research and development is devoted to making LEDs brighter and more efficient, but sometimes it's the low-level dimming that is more important in an intimate interior

environment."

Boca Flasher provided the LED products, working closely with the designers to provide the right color temperature and dimming performance on AC power. The small size of the LED units made it relatively easy to carve out space within niches or behind glass panels without compromising the millwork proportions. Besides the lobby, warm white LEDs were also used to backlight large panes of white glass in the downstairs cellar lounge and provide uplighting from linear zinc shelves on one wall in a bar on the second floor. "The challenge was to create spaces that felt warm, sexy and comfortable," says Michael Cummings, senior designer for Focus Lighting. "LEDs afforded us the ability to create glowing planes and niches of light embedded within a variety of different materials throughout the project that were very discrete."

Gregory points out that the designers worked to ensure that each space was not illuminated solely using LEDs, however. While the source was ideally suited to the project due to its characteristics, it still has its limitations. "We wanted to make sure that the space wasn't only illuminated by LED, as even the best fixtures have somewhat of an unnatural quality," he says. "Where we needed the small size and minimal maintenance provided by the LEDs, they made perfect sense, and the low-level dimming contributed to the subtle, smoky environment we were trying to create."

In each room, however, the team included at least one halogen or incandescent source to create balance and softness. Candles were also used throughout to add a sense of warmth. "Introducing a few traditional lighting elements at key points in the design rounded out the overall feeling of the space for a pleasant and intimate guest experience," says Gregory.

Still, the designer was very pleased with the resulting effects of the LEDs in their respective applications. Why? Gregory says the project works because the chosen LED products provide the right color temperature, dim in a desired fashion, and fit into the millwork panels properly. This, however, didn't happen by accident.

The lighting designers understood that the reliance on LED sources required a great deal of attention to the details. Numerous mockups ensured the architecture could accommodate the LED products, ensuring sufficient space in the backlighting cavities to avoid hot spots through the right amount of diffusion.

The extra effort spent on the LEDs paid off in the end result.

Photography: JR Krauza

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