

More space, less energy and a mix of old and new fixtures bring the artwork into focus at a relocated gallery in midtown Manhattan

BY PAUL TARRICONE

Photos: Eric Baumgartner

Reuse, Reduce, Revive

The physical move of the Hirschl & Adler Galleries from Manhattan's Upper East Side to midtown covered only 13 city blocks but it triggered a much broader shift in lighting design strategy. For decades, the gallery was an under-the-radar energy hog, relying entirely on an abundance of PAR 38 halogen track lighting that cast high levels of light on the artwork in a building that was not bound by the new New York City energy code set to take effect.

The relocation provided a dose of reality regarding lighting power density (a maximum allowance of 1.7 watts per sq ft in the new space), resulting in some creative solutions from lighting designer Bonny Whitehouse, Whitehouse Lighting Design, LLC, Mahopac, NY. To cut fixture costs, the old PAR track heads did make the trip down to The Crown Building on Fifth Avenue, but they're now joined by MR16 recessed downlights, MR16 track-head fixtures and LED track-head fixtures. The result—more dramatic lighting and a reduction in energy use of more than 50 percent from the previous space.

Prior to the move, the gallery—specializing in American and European paintings, watercolors, drawings and sculpture from the 18th through the early 20th centuries—had been located since 1977 in a townhouse on East 70th Street. The move in 2011 consolidated seven floors into one floor in The Crown Building that measures nearly 9,000 sq ft—about 25 percent larger than the former space. Five rooms house the ever-changing exhibits, while hallways and offices likewise serve as quasi exhibit space for the paintings and other art.

When proposing the switch to LEDs and MR16s, Whitehouse and Evan Mann Architect, New York City, had to win the heart and mind of Hirschl & Adler's in-house lighting professional, who had a long-standing affinity for halogen. "The client had occupied their previous space on the Upper East Side for 33 years and over that period of time had tuned the space with an arsenal of halogen lamps. They knew those systems well," says Mann. While the heart might have said, *stay with halogen*, the mind knew a change was essential. "Upon their move downtown, they were thrust into the filing requirements of the new space, which required a much stricter and limiting watts per sq ft. This obviously involved a change in lighting approach and an exploration of LED lamps. Their faith in a new lighting system was admirable," says Mann. Adds Whitehouse: "We had to get them to love the LED... which they did."

The zoning of the building was the key factor that drove down the energy use. The Fifth Avenue building is zoned as retail "and we had no exceptions for the lighting of artwork," explains Whitehouse.



Old PAR38 halogen track heads from the previous space combine with LED and MR16 track heads, slicing energy use in half. The design team got creative and counted the walls as “merchandise” space in this retail-zoned building, in order to grab more watts.

However, Whitehouse and Mann cleverly acquired more watts per sq ft by counting the walls in the gallery (where the paintings hang) as “merchandise” square footage, thereby gaining extra LPD.

MORE DRAMA

In addition to the code and source issues, the designers focused on reimagining the gallery through a lighting scheme that was markedly different from the earlier one. The previous gallery was “extremely dramatic; the space was dark and the paintings were so bright they popped,” Whitehouse says. For the new space, “the design vision was to keep the space as simple and ‘background’ as possible, allowing the artwork to shine in a contemporary but quiet home,” says Mann. Drama and contrast between the background and artwork were the mandates from the client, Whitehouse adds, leading to “very narrow beam spreads that allowed light to hit the art without a crazy amount of spill light.”

To create this drama in an energy-conscious manner, recessed trimless track lighting is used throughout the five gallery rooms, with maximum wattages of 30 watts per linear ft. “Anything else would have been way too bright,” says Whitehouse. The track fixtures are a hodge-podge of LED, MR16 and the PAR 38s imported from the prior space to shave costs. Flexibility was critical, enabling staff to add or remove track heads as the exhibits come and go. “The client ex-



Display cases (foreground) have LED lights that can be popped out as the shelves are repositioned.

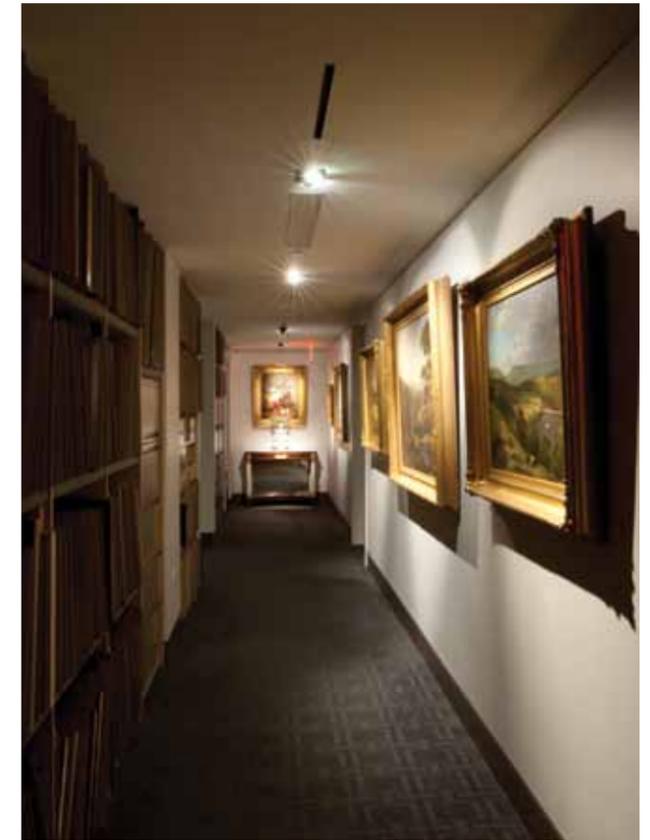


The corridors are also used as exhibit space, but low ceiling height prevented the use of track lighting. Recessed MR16 downlights are used here in the entry hall.

pected flexibility in fixture placement with a consistency in illumination and color rendition across their entire art collection,” says Mann. Meanwhile, the lighting track, itself, resembles the air diffusers notched into the ceiling, creating a crisp coordinated look overhead.

Flexible lighting extends to the glass display cases in the galleries. Small LED lights inside the cases can be swapped in and out as the shelves are repositioned.

Other areas in the Hirschl & Adler Galleries are put to work in the pursuit of displaying and selling art. “The hallways and private offices act as secondary showrooms and had to be lit accordingly. This added to the complexity of including many ‘display’ fixtures under a restrictive power limit,” says Mann. Track couldn’t be used in these areas due to the ceiling heights, so the workhorse luminaires are recessed, trimless MR16 downlights used in the entry corridor and in combination with linear fluorescent lights (with gels added to them for warmth) in other corridors.



As is the case in the galleries, the linear air diffusers align with the MR16 and fluorescent lighting for a crisp, unified appearance along the ceiling plane.

With the relocation completed in 2011, the galleries, hallways and private offices are all well-lighted, despite the shrinkage in wattage from the prior location. ■

METRICS THAT MATTER

Hirschl & Adler Galleries

Watts per sq ft: 1.7

Illuminance Levels: office spaces = 40-50 fc; corridors w/artwork = 50-60 fc; gallery rooms vary based on the exhibits

Lamp Types: 4

Fixture Types: 6

THE DESIGNERS



Bonny Whitehouse, LC, Member IES, (1998), is principal of Whitehouse Lighting Design, LLC, and a past-president of the IES New York City Section. Evan Mann is principal of Evan Mann Architect.