

INSIDE THE MUSEUM

A look at the technology that bridges the natural and the artificial in lighting.

“ULTIMATELY IT’S ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF VIEWING ART TOGETHER WITH OTHER PEOPLE. IT’S A BUILDING FOR THE LONG RUN; THE LIGHT AND SPACE MUST WORK 100 YEARS FROM NOW.”

GARY TINTEROW MFAH Director

■ What makes great lighting?

The average person may find it difficult to put into words, but they know it when they see it... literally. Light is essential to the human experience, and even without a technical vocabulary for lighting, nearly every person on earth can grasp whether a space is lit well or poorly within a single glance.

But being able to articulate what makes not just good, but great lighting, becomes paramount when working on one of the premier museums in North America. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston’s recently completed Nancy and Rich Kinder Building is not only an architectural marvel, but a supremely well-tuned instrument of light and lighting. Gallery lights here face some of the most rigorous challenges of quality, high-performance lighting that exist in the industry.

For instance, focus should be on the art, not the walls. The Kinder Building’s 16-ft tall canvas of inner gallery walls need to be illuminated uniformly from top to bottom so that art pieces do not compete for attention against background gradations.

Color temperature doesn’t just set the mood; good color mixing and matching is crucial for both the proper illumination of art and to seamlessly merge with natural light. The Kinder building’s unique and pioneering architectural design seeks to tame the Texas daylight into a beautifully diffuse, ambient experience. It is essential that gallery lights be able to mimic and match it wherever they overlap.

The Q-Wall linear wall wash, based on QuarkStar’s award-winning Edge-X technology, delivered on all of the above and more ... all packaged into a fixture so small, when the museum saw it placed in a ceiling mockup, they chose to redesign the cove to take advantage of the empty space that was left behind.

This is what QuarkStar’s Edge-X



Above: Seamless integration of architecture and technology: The blending of natural sunlight with concealed luminaires creates the impression of daylight penetration far into the gallery space.

enables. An architectural vision such as the Kinder Building should not have to design around a fixture. Instead, the lighting should be integrated invisibly into the built environment and deliver an experience nearly indistinguishable from standing near a window or under a cloud-inspired skylight.

“The Kinder Building represents a glorious trinity of lighting innovation based on the interplay of the physics, engineering, and design of light: Reflection in how the skylight bounces light around until it’s a wonderfully diffuse glow. Luminescence from what is emitted by the glass cylinders on the façade. And now a sculpting of light, which is what QuarkStar’s Edge-X technology allows us to do, creating through refraction alone these beautiful sheets of indirect lighting. All these

innovations were inspired by the human need for artistic expression, just as artistic expression itself inspires ever greater innovations. We have great confidence that in places like the MFAH this feedback loop of inspiration and innovation will continue long into the future.” ■

LOUIS LERMAN CEO QuarkStar

To find out more, please visit www.QuarkStar.com

“SOMEONE ASKED ME WHAT MY FAVORITE MATERIAL WAS. I SAID, IT’S LIGHT.”

STEVEN HOLL Architect



Above: Q-Wall’s diminutive size and best-in-class light distribution means curators can easily display art of multiple sizes and shapes throughout the galleries without worrying about hot spots or dark spots, while visitors are able to appreciate the collections from multiple viewpoints without distracting shadows or discomfort glare.



Left: As the sun sets, QuarkStar takes over, flawlessly maintaining consistent, even illumination on feature walls.