

Bringing the light back

Kevin Cawley lights the Christchurch Casino in New Zealand

When I was approached by the Christchurch Casino to relight the outside top part of the building, I was excited and knew it was going to be a challenge. Being a member of the Dark Skies Association, I knew this would be my most difficult project to date. The brief was to light the Christchurch Casino in order to attract people back to the city centre and to enhance and give a vibrancy to Victoria and Peterborough Streets. This was part of the

campaign to bring the city to life with light and put Christchurch back on the world stage.

The design that I came up with was a wonderful example of how you can integrate lighting while keeping the architectural integrity of the building intact, as you cannot see any of the light fittings that deliver this sophisticated symphony of colour and movement. One of the passions I have when lighting architecture is seeing the effect, not the fittings.

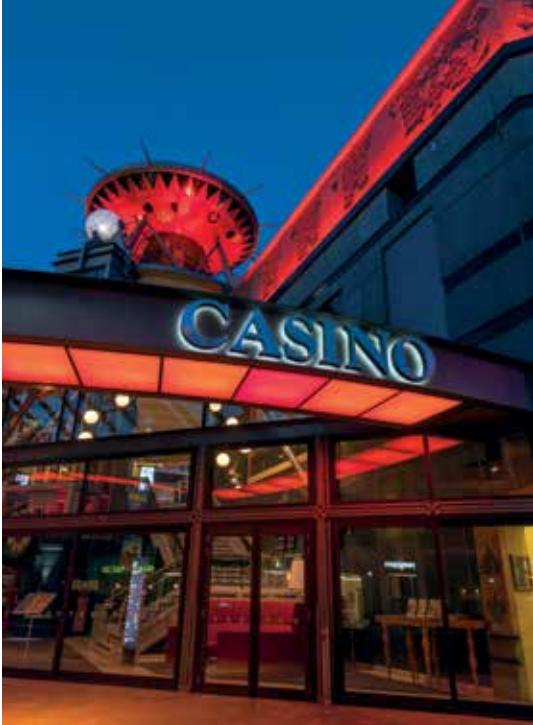
The use of the correct colours in theatre is essential in conveying the message and emotion to the audience. So, given this, I mixed specific colours to excite and attract people, while at the same time having respect for the architecture.

The way I achieved this was to construct a false pelmet all around the building. The building had four black lines of granite negative detail, accentuating the building's elegance. The top line was a perfect place to hide the fittings concealed by day and by night. This false pelmet was specifically designed not only to hide the fittings but also act as a light reflector. The design of the pelmet needed to appear as the original granite line. There were several factors that needed to be taken into account when designing this pelmet, including wind, rain, snow, heat expansion, weight and secure fixings. We managed to achieve not just one effect but three: *One*: A perfect line of light without interruption that appears as a stand-alone fitting; *two*: a silhouette effect on the individual embossed playing card concrete characters; and *three*: an uninterrupted line of light at the pelmet.

The success of these three effects was achieved by using 10 degree fittings that projected light 1.8 meters away and bouncing light off the bullnose capping. The magic was achieved by the individual detailed focusing of 185 fittings. The accuracy of the focusing by the team not only achieved the desired result but



All photos by Murray Irwin



also created a sophisticated, elegant appearance, illuminating the building upwards with limited light spill.

The system is DMX programmed with two-minute light sequences, displaying a moving colour feast. The fact that it can be changed for an event or function is a real plus. The colour palette was incredibly challenging but it was extremely exciting to create given the different composition

of the grey concrete panels. The colours created were unique and specific to the Casino. The many hours spent plotting to create these unique colours were well rewarded with the public making extremely positive comments. But it's not just about putting colour on buildings; it's about how you use the colour, as we do in the theatre. The time taken to understand what the project requires and how colour can affect the outcome is all in the time taken in creating and plotting the scenes.

This design has won several awards, the first from the Royal Astronomical Society of New Zealand. This was for efficient, effective, sustainable protection of the night environment, in conjunction with the Illumination Engineering Society of Australia and New Zealand, which also recognised the design. The design and

installation also won the Lighting Council New Zealand Lighting Award at the prestigious biennial Master Electricians Excellence Awards.

The Casino management was extremely pleased with the final result. CEO Brett Anderson said, "I was blown away. If I stand on the street corner now, the lighting has changed the building at night. It has revitalized a 23-year-old building that had got a bit lost in the dark space left after the earthquakes. Working with Kevin was so easy. We had worked with him before and knew his reputation and the awards that he had won. He is a perfectionist with an amazing imagination. I had an idea and had to hand it over to someone to make it happen and Kevin and his team did this, with many late nights out on the pavement staring at the building." #

