



Clever light solutions add strings to Archer's bow

The way retail outlets and properties are lit is already both technical and sophisticated, but the process is likely to grow a deal more clever as LED comes of age. **Tom James** reports

Electrical contractors are searching for ever more ingenious ways to light their clients' retail displays and properties. Key to this expansion in shop-front and interior illuminations has been the explosion in LED and its applications over the last four or five years.

The result has been dramatically more impressive lighting impact and radically lower energy costs. Some contractors have seized the market opportunity, exploiting it at a time when the high street desperately needs more sales fizz.

"We highlighted a niche particularly in retail shop fittings where there was clear demand for a more bespoke and stylish lighting design," explains Adrian Archer, Founder and Managing Director of Nottingham firm Archer Electrical.

"We've built up a highly specialised in-house design team who work on putting into action the continually more specific requirements of the client, who seek to make better use of light instore to entice shoppers and encourage sales."

With 27 years experience in the industry, Archer Electrical have thrived in turbulent times, continuing to grow in what is arguably the most challenging recession Britain has witnessed.

Prestige

Tapping into new markets and trends has been critical to the company's growth, alongside building solid, lasting foundations with their supply chain by insisting on using only top lighting specialists.

The boom in LED technology has shifted Archer's emphasis in recent years, and as such, it has forged new links with major players in LED manufacturing to ensure the company deliver on the requirements of their growing list of high-end clients.

Installing industry-leading lighting systems, which combine energy efficiency with aesthetic effectiveness is a ready reason for their bulging order book, which include Harrods, who Archer partnered when fitting out a number of the Kensington department store's luxury brand concessions.

Chanel, Tom Ford, The Prada Group and Manolo Blahnik too presented Archer with prestigious jobs they are proud of, the last client particularly so as Adrian Archer explains. "Manolo Blahnik requested a unique lighting scheme, which was a challenge within a public space where installation had to take place while customers were in the store.

"Harrods and Manolo Blahnik were also particular about the fittings and lamp types used in their

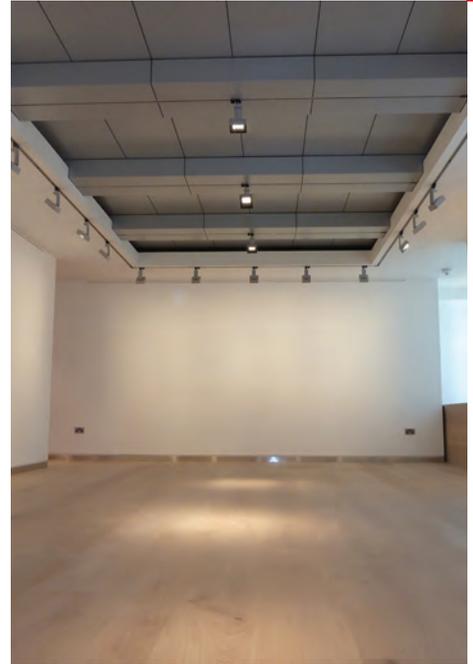
ceilings, so we and our partners Lightworks developed a solution that met the requirements for a low ambient light level with the need for brightly lit products."

The demand for lighting that focuses customer attention quickly, on certain products, and links in with in-store merchandising is growing, Archer report, and in this case, the effect was achieved with high quality adjustable downlights with a 24-degree low glare optic and 35W 3000K ceramic metal halide lamp.

The sophistication of lighting operations, management and touch-screen technology, not just fittings, means Archer have to work closely and consistently with partners to deliver the optimum result for the client.

Key partnerships

This is often a matter of managing client expectations and guiding them on what will work best from an aesthetic and practical perspective, Adrian Archer says. Key partnerships are the root of long-term success and in the last 12 months, the company have developed closer ties with LED specialists. One such manufacturer, ECOLED, has



▲ A key strength of Adrian Archer Electrical – and a sign of the quality, depth and breadth of its services – is that its relationships span companies ranging from retail (Starbucks, and Manolo Blahnik (left)) to SMEs, such as the Thomas Gibson Fine Art gallery in Mayfair, London, (above right) where it worked with LED specialists, ECOLED

partnered Archer on several high-profile jobs, notably for West-End art gallery Thomas Gibson Fine Art, whose brief was to install state-of-the-art light control and deliver energy efficiencies.

"We've been working with Archer on and off for the last five years, but the past 12-months have seen our work together increase," explains ECOLED's Guy Dyke-Price, "largely through their clients requesting LED technology that we have technical expertise in.

"LED is exploding," he adds, "but still represents only a small but rapidly changing percentage of the UK market but the enormous energy savings and low maintenance benefits for the retail sector mean it will continue soar and the growth in the adoption of this technology by Archer's retail clients suggest this is the case."

When specifying lighting for sensitive public and retail settings, an art gallery for example, LED can be viewed as a far more effective solution as it now generates more consistent and accurate colour rendering and better quality light, while heat output

is dramatically less than traditional alternatives.

"If you're lighting expensive pieces of art, prolonged heat exposure could eventually damage the works on display," Dyke-Price reveals.

"Likewise in retail, where prolonged exposure to the heat of traditional light sources can bleach goods such as dyed leather bags or wallets, creating product churn and lost turnover through wastage. This is removed with LED."

Performance figures suggest that high quality LED luminaires can achieve in excess of 50,000 hours of peak performance time with energy savings – "80 to 90%" – and low maintenance to boot.

A recent fit-out by ECOLED of a 37-storey student halls high-rise in Manchester is estimated to save the client around £200,000 annually by adopting their ZEP1 5 Watt down light instead of the traditional 50W halogen lamp. The colour appeal of LED is developing too, Dyke-Price points out, and there's evidence that the market is warming up to the development and sophistication of LED as a viable alternative for producing warm

tones as well as the cool white light that it's often wrongly associated with. The retailers Next and Waitrose are cases in point, the latter having just launched a purely LED supermarket.

Dyke-Price is fervent in his belief in LED as an eventual one-stop shop for lighting, certainly where energy reduction is concerned. "If every household in the country replace just one traditional 60W light bulb with an 11W LED light, we would save 2.1mte a year of carbon and £540m a year in energy bills."

Archer knows the value of environmental credentials in business and sees the new Green Deal installer accreditation as an excellent opportunity to offer clients added value and energy savings.

Its Green Deal approved installer status will add to its list of industry accreditations and Archer plans for clients to buy into lowering their carbon output.

"The information and expertise we can offer as a result of our approved status will allow the customer to recover the initial installation costs through future savings on energy bills," Adrian Archer states.