

Great History - Subtle Illumination

Museum Bronbeek showcases the rich history of the Netherlands' colonial-military past. It is part of a vast estate that includes the Royal Home for Retired Military Personnel, memorial monuments, a (children's) farm, a mortuary, and a restaurant.

This national museum, which sheds light on a complex part of history, presents a new exhibition that tells the story of the Dutch colonial presence in Indonesia between 1816 and 1962. Additionally, a permanent exhibition illustrates the rise and fall of the Netherlands as a colonial power in Asia. Through personal stories, artifacts, photographs, and videos, visitors are transported back in time.

This storytelling approach, centered around various objects and narratives, is also reflected in the new permanent exhibition *Through the Eyes of...*. The museum aims to encourage visitors to form their own perspectives on history. By incorporating multiple viewpoints, visitors are immersed in the past as it was experienced by different individuals.

The illumination of this historical theme is both impressive in content and striking in execution. Lighting designer Coen van der Hoeven was involved from the initial sketch phase to ensure the visual impact of this complex story.

His approach is deeply rooted in his background as a theatrical lighting designer. He explains: *"I try to illuminate objects in a somewhat theatrical way. Positioning and shadow play are very important to me."* While designing the lighting concept, he collaborated with the museum and the design studio to develop an understanding of the desired atmosphere, the types of display cases, the color schemes of the spaces, and the objects to be highlighted.

He then explored the available lighting options, aligning them with the client's requirements. His goal was to find the smallest possible spotlight with the highest possible light quality. Additional requirements included high quality, versatility (such as zoom capabilities, pendants, and different adapters), and a broad selection of LED color temperatures. Coen explains: *"That quickly led me to the Focus Micro."* This compact yet fully equipped zoom fixture series from CLS LED is about the size of an AA battery. Its small size makes the fixture virtually invisible and unobtrusive, without compromising functionality.

These fixtures, combined with Pharos lighting control via (wireless) DMX and Casambi, allowed the exhibition to be illuminated exactly as intended. However, the display setup posed a challenge: *"The limited space in the overcrowded display cases was the biggest obstacle. Additionally, the different layers of objects blocked light from reaching certain areas, making the setup more complex and requiring additional fixtures."* In this case, the small size of the luminaires proved to be a significant advantage.

Natural daylight also complicated the lighting process. *"The large amount of daylight entering some rooms sharply contrasted with the very limited light exposure I could add to certain objects. It was difficult to compensate for daylight with artificial lighting."* Despite these challenges, the final result speaks for itself.

Beyond the technical difficulties, this was also a particularly fascinating project to be part of and an extraordinary museum to work for. The lighting designer was especially drawn to the fact that both sides of the colonial past were highlighted. Additionally, the unique atmosphere of the building and its dual function as a retirement home for veterans made this a one-of-a-kind project for him.

The client is highly enthusiastic about the result, and Coen himself is very pleased with both the lighting design and the fixtures used. *"I'm extremely satisfied; the atmosphere is just right. It has a serene and dignified appearance. I'm also very enthusiastic about the Focus Micro and the Focus GIII (now G4). The zoom range is fantastic, the light quality is beautiful, and they are easy to handle. The Micro's size is unparalleled."*