



## State of the art: ERCO transforms the lighting at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, a historic setting for the famous contemporary Pinault Collection

Originally designed as a grand family residence in the 18th century, the classical Palazzo Grassi on the Grand Canal is nowadays a prestigious centre for contemporary art in Venice. With a succession of owners over the centuries, and famously renovated in 2005 by leading Japanese architect Tadao Ando, in 2023 it was brought completely up to date with a cutting-edge lighting system from ERCO.

### Project data:

Project:	Palazzo Grassi, Venice / Italy
Architecture:	Giorgio Massari, 1687 – 1766, Venice / Italy, Tadao Ando Architect & Associates, Tokyo / Japan
Photography:	Marcela Schneider Ferreira, Milan / Italy

Palazzo Grassi became a venue for art exhibitions when owned by the Fiat Group. But its story took a significant turn when it was bought in 2005 by French billionaire François Pinault, owner of a contemporary art collection that includes more than 5000 works by 20th and 21st-century artists. Ando's subsequent major renovation conserved the grandeur of the original 1772 palace, while equipping the building with modern facilities for displaying art, a total of 40 rooms, providing 5000 sqm of exhibition space. As part of the François Pinault Collection, Palazzo Grassi features rotating exhibitions from Pinault's extensive art collection, as well as site-specific installations commissioned from contemporary artists.

### Radical lighting upgrade

Nearly 20 years after the restoration, however, it was recognised that the lighting system needed a comprehensive upgrade. The key challenge was to achieve a flexible, high-quality solution while preserving the integrity of a historic building. The fittings chosen were ERCO's [Parscan 48V LED spotlights](#), which allowed the latest lighting technology to be integrated with the existing simple suspended beam systems designed by Ando to preserve the integrity of the beautiful ornate ceilings.

With excellent light output and low energy use, the Parscan 48V range is also sustainably produced and manufactured in line with ERCO [Greenology](#). A compact and highly

flexible spotlight system specifically designed for use in museums and galleries, it offers precise interchangeable light distributions and dimming capabilities. This enables optimal control and adaptability, crucial for lighting artworks that may have a range of different lighting requirements.

The Parscan's pared-down design also reflects Ando's minimalist aesthetic. Its low profile allows focus on the artworks not the fittings and preserves the architectural integrity of the palace, blending seamlessly with the beams in the exhibition areas.

The luminaires selected have a wallwashing distribution. This produces a uniform illumination across a large surface, avoiding stark contrasts and shadows. Instead, the fittings subtly enhance the art by providing a soft, even light that allows the colours and details of the artwork to be faithfully rendered. [Wallwashing](#) also contributes to the perception of brightness and therefore increases visual comfort. The fidelity to the appearance of the art is enhanced by neutral white LED sources (3500K) with high colour rendering (CRI 92) ensuring that the colours are as true to life as possible.

A crucial factor in upgrading the lighting system was state-of-the-art control. Throughout the Palazzo Grassi the lighting is orchestrated by a Casambi wireless lighting control solution based on [Bluetooth Low Energy](#). The integration of the Casambi system provides an intuitive user interface and allows for real-time adjustments, ensuring the perfect lighting conditions at all times. This flexibility makes it an invaluable tool for such a dynamic environment, where different areas of the gallery may have varying lighting requirements.

#### **Tool-free flexibility**

One of the key features of the [Parscan](#) system is tool-free interchangeable optics, which offer flexibility for both current and future displays. If artworks change or there are new

exhibitions, the optics can be easily swapped out for different ones without requiring a complete overhaul of the lighting system.

The Parscan spotlights are not restricted solely to the display spaces. Their flexible nature means they are also used to light the magnificent marble staircase. With their precise light distribution and dimming capabilities, they not only create safe navigation – ensuring clear visibility and no potentially confusing shadows – but create a visually cohesive and aesthetically pleasing lit environment throughout.

#### **Light as a critical component**

„Light is not merely a functional aspect but a critical component of the design in presenting artworks and illuminating historical architecture,” says Michele Cascio of ERCO Italy. „It helps shape the viewer's experience, eliciting emotions, and facilitating understanding and appreciation of the art and architecture.”

Along with Punta della Dogana, another venue for the Pinault Collection in Venice and also lit by ERCO, Palazzo Grassi stands as a key landmark for contemporary art in the city. It's an example of how advanced technology can be used to respect and highlight historical architecture while meeting the changing demands of contemporary art display, says Mauro Baronchelli, executive director of Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana.

„The quality of lighting within the spaces has improved, the system can be operated remotely in a very simple way, and the intervention is very discreet, respecting the architectural mark of Tadao Ando, who designed the spaces in 2006. I believe the result achieved met all our expectations.”

## Luminaires used in the project



Parscan 48V

### About ERCO

ERCO is an international specialist for high-quality and digital architectural lighting. The family-owned company, founded in 1934, operates globally in 55 countries with independent sales organisations and partners.

ERCO understands light as the fourth dimension of architecture – and thus as an integral part of sustainable building. Light is the contribution to making society and architecture better and, at the same time, preserving our environment. ERCO Greenology® – the corporate strategy for sustainable lighting – combines ecological responsibility with technological expertise.

At the light factory in Lüdenscheid, Germany, ERCO develops, designs and manufactures

luminaires with a focus on photometric optics, electronics and sustainable design. The lighting tools are developed in close collaboration with architects, lighting designers and electrical designers. They are used primarily in the following applications: Work and Culture, Community and Public/Outdoor, Contemplation, Living, Shop and Hospitality. ERCO lighting experts support designers worldwide in transforming their projects into reality with highly precise, efficient and sustainable lighting solutions.

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