

ALINGSÅS 2005 WORKSHOP GALLERY - KEVIN THEOBALD/GB

The Methodist Church

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The greatest challenge facing the group was that the church has been painted green and there was a deal of early conjecture as to how the surfaces would react to different colours of light.

The group were fortunate to have an early meeting with the pastor of the church Ragne Fransson and the chairman Bengt Johansson who readily agreed that it would be possible to place equipment within the church as well as around the facades. We had been provided with a considerable amount of dynamic LED luminaires from TIR Systems in addition to the conventional equipment available.

The first evening was spent on site with a selection of the lighting equipment which allowed the group to explore how light worked in relation to the project site. This was also an opportunity to look at the interior spaces of the church.

One of the challenges facing the group was that the church has been painted green and there was a deal of early conjecture as to how the surfaces would react to different colours of light. Workshop sessions followed in the morning where discussion ensued regarding not only the building but the spiritual nature of the site. Various aspects of religion were considered and research into the early days of the Methodist church

revealed that the Wesley brothers had started their mission in the streets. This led the group to discuss how we could bring the inside of the church to the street by using light. As a secondary task it was agreed that as the church is built on two levels, with the main place of worship on the first floor we wished to unite the levels through light.

We looked at lighting from inside through the windows which are panelled and coloured in pastel tones but the effects on the street were disappointing, even after attempts were made to use white material to enhance the effect.

Further trials were then carried out to assess how we could best reveal the interior of the church. Early experiments in uplighting the chandeliers resulted in interesting patterns but it was agreed that the results were too busy but this led to looking at reversing the effect and looking at how light from outside at the rear of the church would be seen from the front. Narrow beam 70W Schreder spotlights were placed on the ground and aimed through the upper windows which not only achieved the image of the chandelier on the ceiling but picked up all of the colours in the windows which resulted in a beautiful summer sunlight effect.

As part of the desire to unify the levels of the building it had been noted that there was a vast array of different domestic lamps distributed around the various rooms in the building. It was agreed that these would form the key to inferring the human scale of the lower part of the building.

Having established the key to the concept work was then carried out in creating consolidated inner warmth to the building. This was achieved using the TIR Destiny CG LED luminaires which were placed on the floor adjacent to the windows at both levels facing the street. Due to the different heights and décor considerable time was spent finding complimentary colours which achieved the illusion that the building was one open hall.

Having succeeded in unifying the building from the main façade we then worked on the main entrance which is in effect on three levels. We were fortunate that the church were prepared to allow us to close off the main room on the first floor which provided the opportunity to light up the ceiling which allowed the group to create shadows echoing those in the main body of the church. Further LED luminaires were placed in the organ loft and in the main entrance. Due to the different volumes it was again necessary to work with the lighting control engineer to balance the colours. It was interesting to note that although each member had

personal preferences of colour consensus was achieved quite quickly as

the building played a strong part in dictating what worked best. The sign above the front doors is normally lit with small flood lights but we felt it was better to use a linear fluorescent source which could illuminate the sign without affecting the overall interior effect.

At a very early stage it had been agreed that the TIR Destiny SL luminaires worked extremely well to illuminate the main façade but it was not until the interior effects had been resolved that the group turned its attention to exactly what colour mix would work with the building. It was readily apparent that a saturated blue produced a pleasing result which was complimentary to the interior effect. One matter which was discussed amongst the group was how red light would work on the green surface of the church and through experimentation a particular tone of magenta resulted in a monochrome effect which was eerie but interesting.

Due to the nature of how most visitors would view the building walking past the main façade it was agreed that a dynamic effect would be desirable but without creating too much distraction. A very slow (almost imperceptible) change between blue and the magenta was created so that all visitors would experience the building in both of its illuminated states.

What was discovered at this stage was that the interior effects appeared different under each of the external states so time was spent balancing changes in the interior to compensate for the colour shift.

The effects of the saturated colour were found to distract from the significance of the white timber frame so narrow PAR30 spotlights were used to highlight each vertical element.

Having achieved a coherent scheme it was observed that the sloped roof and small tower on top of the church were not visible which resulted in a visual flattening of the building. Investigations were made to see if it were possible to place lighting inside the tower but building improvements carried out in the 1970s made this impossible, so we attached very narrow spotlights to the street light column opposite the building to highlight the roof elements.

Part of the concept discussion had been to create symbols of light. Whilst carrying out the earlier investigations we discovered a small statue of Christ in the Pastors robbing room which also has a window featuring a cross in stained glass. This is the only visual clue that the building is a church, the crosses on the roof having been removed many years ago.

Through experimentation it was revealed that brightly illuminating the wall behind the statue produced a strong silhouette visible for the street. The group felt that this expressed symbolism was the finishing touch to bringing the church back to the street.

On the opening night we were able to meet with a number of members of the congregation and they all agreed that the lighting was a great enhancement to there building and hoped that its raised profile during Lights in Alingsås would encourage new members to join the church.

All of the group were pleased with the result and due to their dynamic each member had made a significant contribution to the outcome which was also very well received by the people of the town. Due to the time constraints the design process was compressed and at times items were by necessity considered out of order, but all of the aspects which would form part of a real project were covered.

The additional practical opportunities afforded by the workshop complement the lecture format of learning which all of the participants have received as part of there education.

The group used the following statement to summarise their concept:
'Early demonstrations on how the building took light revealed an inspiration to draw the spirituality from the building to the street.

Shaping the light allows symbols to find new life through the creation of God's auditorium and evoke emotion in a scenographic re-interpretation. An immediate play with the public and private realms extends God's house into an exterior church of the night'.