

THE GOLDEN AGE OF COUTURE

The Victoria & Albert Museum, London

Lighting Design by **David Atkinson Lighting Design (DALD)**

Exhibition Design by **Land Design Studio**

Picture Credits: **Nick Wood for Land Design Studio Ltd**



Land Design's creative use of large-scale video projection onto the gauzes and walls helps to add depth animation to this gallery

The Golden Age of Couture' exhibition was held recently at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. The launch of Christian Dior's New Look in 1947 marked the beginning of a momentous decade in fashion history, one that Dior himself called the 'Golden Age'. Celebrating the end of war and the birth of a new era, it set a standard for dressmaking and high fashion that has rarely been surpassed. The V&A's exhibition explores this remarkable decade in fashion history.

David Atkinson Lighting Design (DALD) completed the lighting design for the exhibition. The exhibition designers Land Design Studio's brief to DALD was for the lighting to create a theatrical event, as well as adhering to the strict conservation constraints.

The first gallery takes a practical aspect, focusing on the skills, processes and craftsmanship of haute couture, along with the creative inspiration behind some of the styles. The lighting plays a key role in creating layers through the use of simple uplighting, by recessed fluorescents to solid



The quality of the lighting design is subtly enhanced through the simple use of hints of colour, contrast and dramatic angles



A bold lighting theme was given for 'The Legacy' area, by uplighting the white casement ceiling in pink to create a real sense of theatre.



By externally lighting the large glass showcases from the high level tracks, a sense of airiness is created around the exhibits. This gives quite acute lighting angles, which helps to accentuate the form of the dresses.

red panels and large stretched scrim gauzes. Land Design's creative use of large-scale video projection onto the gauzes and walls helps to add depth animation to this gallery.

DALD chose to use a limited palette of AR111 based fixture, which included Light Projects Mentor & Raylight's fitted with a combination of spreader and diffuser lenses. By externally lighting the large glass showcases from the high level tracks, a sense of airiness is created around the exhibits. This also enables the lighting angles to be quite acute which helps to accentuate the form of the dresses.

Smaller displays of shoes and accessories were illuminated by Fibre optics, which were fed by Metal Halide projectors fitted with neutral density filters to reduce the intensity to 50 LUX.

The second gallery is an immersive and theatrical space which features open displays, photographs and video projection. The most striking area within this gallery is the large enclosed ballroom case, which is lit internally by ERCO Optec fixtures fitted with MR16 24 degree lamps. Lighting levels

in this case and the majority were kept to 50 LUX to conform to the strict conservation guidelines. Externally above the ballroom case the designers used a yarn curtain to create a great sense of height and scale. DALD uplit this with T5 fluorescents fitted with Lavender filters giving it a shimmering silver quality.

In contrast to the rest of the exhibition the last area referred to as 'The Legacy' displays Christian Dior dresses designed by London-trained John Galliano, artistic director for Dior since 1997. DALD chose to be quite bold in this area by uplighting the white casement ceiling in pink and to create a real sense of theatre the Dior dresses are lit from a flat angle creating dramatic shadows to the rear wall. A large time line graphic is washed with Mentor fixtures fitted with wall wash optics, which helps contrast with the overall ambient hue of pink light reflected off the ceiling.

Through the simple use of hints of colour, contrast and dramatic angles the lighting design subtly enhances the quality of this unique exhibition.