



Royal West of England Academy (RWA)

Client RWA **Location** Bristol, UK

Brief

Established by the Bristol Society of Artists in 1849, The Royal West of England Academy (RWA) is the oldest art gallery in Bristol, and the only regional academy of art in the UK. This prestigious venue is housed inside a beautiful Grade II listed building and uniquely showcases the work of contemporary and historical visual artists side by side. The stringent display requirements of these valuable pieces of art include the need for a lighting design that can deliver custom LUX levels for each piece that will enhance and celebrate the work without causing any damage. The RWA is also an iconic community space, running workshops that aim to celebrate the diversity in visual arts as well as a series of talks and events. The lighting specification needed to reflect this varied use of the space and bring the non-display areas to life. The venue wanted the flexibility to establish distinctly separate moods for the gallery, educational purposes and after-hours commercial use, and were particularly interested in using colour to help diversify the space and maximise revenue opportunities to help support their continued growth.

Approach

Managing the lighting values around each piece of art individually required a control system that could facilitate individual zones of control for each one of the fittings and GDS' new Prodigy Controller was the perfect choice. A shining example of GDS solution-based lighting design, Prodigy seamlessly interfaces with existing DALI fixtures and can be controlled remotely via app or web browser from any smart device, allowing for easy and instant reconfiguring of light levels throughout the space. Head of Sales at GDS James Hall chose this product for the unique flexibility it provides, saying, "The ability to commission and program each one of the fittings from a mobile smart device in the space was a game changer, as it meant the RWA could dynamically change each one of the light fittings to the required level for each one of the paintings. Day to day operation was also simplified using Prodigy's Scheduler, which automatically powers on and changes the lighting in accordance with the facilities managers program."

GDS also used 60 new Alundra Zoom fittings, which broaden the capacity for precision lighting, to give the RWA beautifully focused high-quality white light that helped to frame their exhibits in an innovative way. James Hall explains, "GDS dropped the track fitting from surface to suspended, so they could benefit by the tightest beam angle of 6 degrees. Each Alundra Zoom has an adjustable 6° to 55° variable beam angle, so with the track fitting suspended, closer to the centre of the room and the artwork, you can get down to a narrow focus spot."



Previously the venue had a blanket coverage of light across all artwork which was nowhere near as impactful, and these new fixtures really enhanced the way this incredible artwork was shown off'. The fully customisable nature of both the Alundra Zoom fittings and the Prodigy Controller also allows for easy adjustment of the lighting when exhibitions change, and a different lighting configuration is required. To help add the versatility the RWA wanted in the space, GDS also installed 40 metres of RGBW LED strip light to the upper alcoves in the galleries. These lights can change colour, contrasting with the powerful white light around the exhibits and help to take the venue seamlessly from day to night.

Outcome

The RWA were delighted with the new subtle lighting design, which highlighted the art flawlessly without drawing focus.

Facilities manager Ben Rowe was particularly impressed with the results saying, “Everyone who saw the space after the new system was installed commented on how the gallery looked the best it had done for a very long time. Our curators are now able to deliver stronger exhibitions as the individual controls on each fitting allow us to show watercolours and oils together, without being restricted by the max lux levels required for each piece. The Prodigy controller has been incredibly easy to use, and I’ve been able to create the desired lighting effects I struggled to achieve before, despite lots of time and effort. We have much better, consistent light across all three galleries now and I think the work GDS have done here has been simply amazing.”

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Facilities Manager RWA

