

WALK THIS WAY

When charged with lighting the walkways of Tower Bridge for events and exhibitions, Eleni Shiarlis opted for a two-system approach to create a versatile permanent scheme for all occasions



Lighting the most famous bridge in the world was always going to be a challenge, especially with a brief of 'no fittings on show', but by working within the incredible architecture and with a methodical yet inspired approach, a stunning show of light and colour has been realised at Tower Bridge in the perfect integration of Victorian construction and cutting edge lighting technology.

Starting in 1884, it took eight years and 11,000 tons of steel to build Tower Bridge spanning the River Thames from the Tower of London (where it gets its name) across to Butlers Wharf. An iconic building recognised worldwide amongst the London skyline, the bridge consists of two towers that are tied together at the upper level by means of two horizontal walkways. The walkways are designed to withstand the horizontal forces exerted by the suspended sections of the bridge to the left and the right.

It is these walkways that have been the focus of the latest addition to this historic building. In order to stage high profile and large scale events, all now managed by Seasoned Events, a permanent lighting scheme was required. Previous to this, various events companies were being hired in to do

the lighting for each event meaning costly and sometimes scrappy temporary solutions. A more practical, cost effective and energy efficient scheme was needed to provide the bridge with events offering to match its iconic status.

The brief to Eleni Shiarlis, who runs her own lighting design practice, was to light the East and West Walkways with an identical lighting scheme. The scheme had to incorporate a versatile dynamic RGB colour changing solution that could be adapted to suit any function / branded space / client event. A general accent lighting solution was also required to light the tourist information boards, the temporary exhibitions and pin spot the tables for the evening events.

The client didn't want to see any fittings so these had to be hidden.

In addition, the lighting was also required to not adversely affect river traffic or pollute the London skyline. It is situated within a major tourist attraction with around one million visitors per year so it also had to be robust and hard wearing as well as creating maximum impact.

The majority of the scheme had to be energy efficient and be controlled by a

lighting control system.

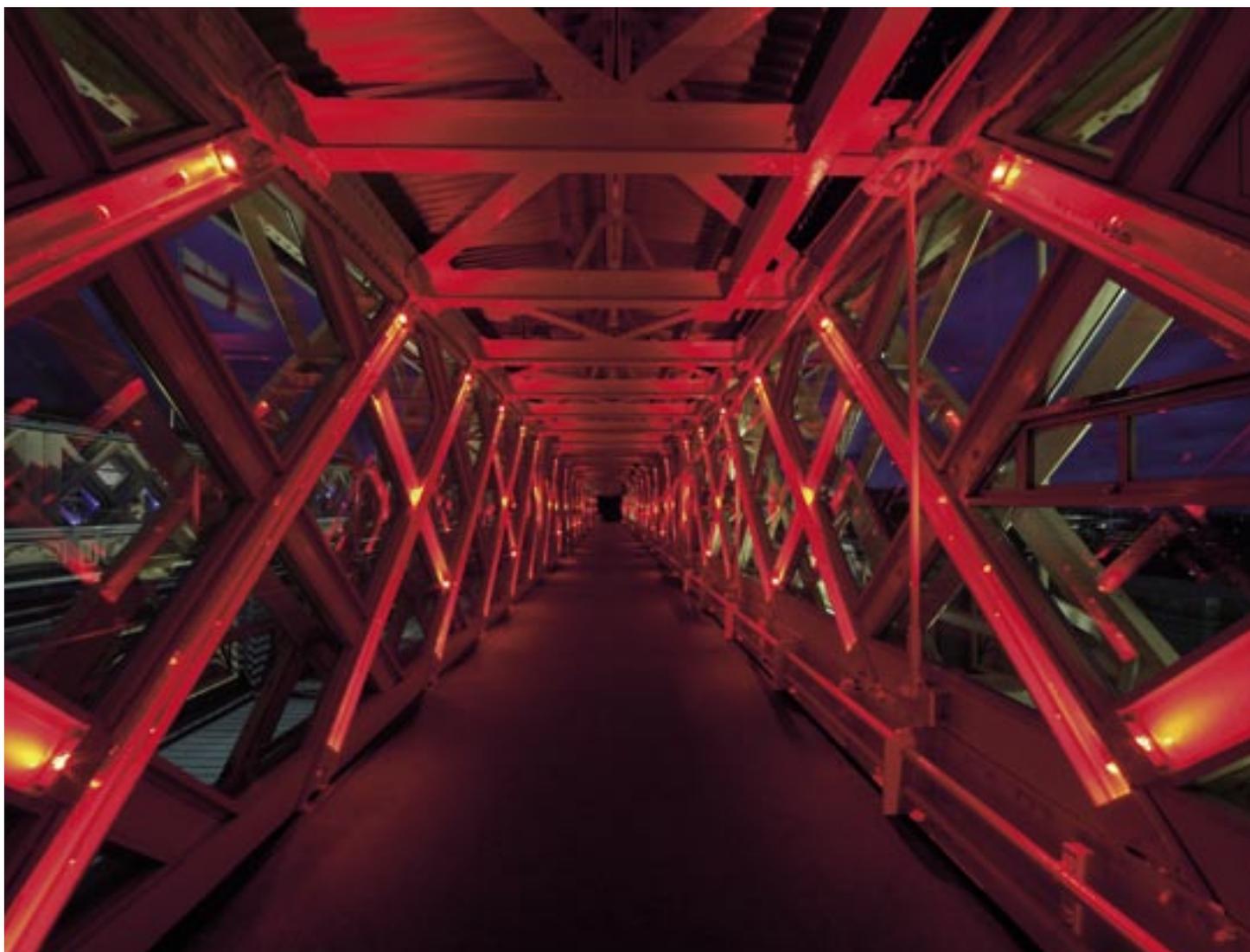
Shiarlis was excited to work on such a famous landmark: "I wanted to work within the beautiful architectural features, highlighting their geometry and structure and not conflicting with them. To enhance the length of the walkways, as they just seem to go on and on, the light used also creates this effect as if the tunnel is lit as far into the distance as the eye can see."

In order to meet the brief, Shiarlis broke the scheme down in to two categories: event lighting and exhibition lighting.

"I knew the two had to work simultaneously but also perform independently."

Extensive tests and a couple of mock-ups were done before the final scheme was decided upon.

The event lighting took a great deal of design planning. Due to the Grade I listing which meant no fixtures could be screwed in to the fabric of the structure, something had to be designed to house the module that could be hidden within the steel lattice architecture with a recess depth of 60mm and also be robust enough to work in a busy public space. Lead manufacturers for the event lighting, Tryka LED, came up with a bespoke bracket to conceal their 316 RGB



Module 3 and 6 units.

Although not immediately visible, the steel frame lattice structure of the walkways forms a pattern, which then flips about half way down. Shiarlis was required to take an extremely methodical approach to lighting this with her own pattern in order for it to work. Each walkway was split into four sections with the south end of each section dedicated as a pre- and post-dinner destination and then later in the evening, dancing and entertaining. In this area there was a higher concentration of LED luminaires with a slightly altered pattern to the rest of the lattice, creating a more intense lighting experience to suit the party mood.

The exhibition lighting had to perform three tasks that could be controlled independently from each other: light the permanent tourist information boards; light the temporary exhibitions that move and change in size; and light both the poseur and dining tables for the evening events.

Working closely with Commercial Lighting Systems, a 50W 350° rotational track mounted dimmable spotlight system was chosen with a 50W medium beam lamp to pin spot the tables.

Due to there being so much natural light

during the day the lighting wasn't required to make such an impact as the night time lighting. However, in the winter months and on a gloomy London day, the track lighting provides adequate light for the thousands of tourists passing through.

At night both the event and exhibition lighting had to work simultaneously and in unison.

Following the success of the panoramic high-level Walkways scheme, Eleni Shiarlis Lighting has also been commissioned to work on three further historic areas of Tower Bridge: the Majestic Victorian Engine Rooms, The Bridge Master's Dining Room and the North Tower Lounge.

The resultant scheme has met with the obvious approval of David Wight, the Director of Tower Bridge, "The event lighting has created a range of stunning effects which exceed our high expectations and will delight our corporate and private clients whose events will be greatly enhanced. The solution of lighting the structure instead of the space and skillfully integrating the purpose built fittings within the depth of the metal beams in the Bridge structure is both innovative and subtle."

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Project Details

Tower Bridge Walkway, London
 Client: Tower Bridge
 Lighting Design: Eleni Shiarlis Lighting
 Contractor: Creative-Light & Power
 Photography: Chris Christoforou

Lighting Specification

Tryka LED (Module 3 & 6 RGB LED units with bespoke brackets), Commercial Lighting Systems (50W 350° rotational track mounted dimmable spotlight system; 50W medium beam pin spot), Mode Lighting (Control)

