Visual Productions controls The Leonardo, Africa’s tallest

Posted on June 4, 2021



Standing taller than any other building in Africa and beautifully lit to complement the Sandton skyline, The Leonardo is a luxurious 55-floor residential property by Legacy Hotels and Resorts and includes apartments, a hotel, shops, eateries, a gym, and a swimming pool. Lighting company, Giantlight, was commissioned to light the delineating spine that runs up the building on the north and south elevations and utilised a Visual Productions CueCore2, supplied by DWR Distribution, to control everything from elegant, static looks to vibrant chases. Since opening its doors in March 2020, the lighting system has run seamlessly.

The Leonardo was developed by Legacy, a leading owner, manager and developer of luxury hotels, game lodges and residences in Africa, and construction commenced in 2015. Interestingly enough, architects Patrick McInerney and Francois Pienaar of Co-Arc International Architects initially designed The Leonardo to be a 33-storey building, but thanks to investors jumping on board anxious, to own this exclusive address and lifestyle, the building literally grew to new heights, overtaking the 223m Carlton Centre in Johannesburg, which since the mid-1970s had been the tallest in Africa.

Copyright © DWR Distribution

“Our involvement in the project started at the end of 2017 when we were called into a meeting with Legacy Development, which actually stemmed from a previous interaction with Jamie Hendry who had worked with my father in Dubai,” Wolfgang Horlacher, Project Manager at Giantlight explains. Giantlight was founded by his father, Otto Horlacher in 2006 and the company has been involved in major projects in the Middle East, Australia, Panama and Africa. “Legacy told us what they had in mind and the greatest challenge was meeting the expectation and vision of the architects while adhering to a budget allocation.”

Giantlight’s involvement in the project was twofold. The Leonardo is adorned with specially commissioned artworks, such as the floor-to-ceiling mural by Mbongeni Buthelezi located at the foyer entrance, and many other paintings, sculptures and textile work. Giantlight were asked to illuminate the art pieces on level 1, 2 and 3, as well as those located in the restaurant on level 7. Standard LED tracking spots and LED downlights were used for this purpose, while linear work was applied to accentuate certain staircases.

The more exhilarating part of the assignment, however, was lighting the exterior of the building which consisted of the roof, two accentuating spines running up the building and the mast. “The spine is made up of modules which were assembled in Midrand and then installed onto the building. Each module houses Ghostlight linear LED and IP rated fixtures. We used IP67 RGBW LED ribbon with close to 1 500m in total,” Wolfgang describes. DWR Distribution supplied Longman Parco 350s which are positioned on the roof, as well as the Visual Productions CueCore2 system and Kiosk Touch interface which communicates via a fibre network. “The building is lit up at sunset every evening, and when the client wants something different, we are able to override the automatic trigger.”

Copyright © DWR Distribution



Otto and Wolfgang Horlacher of Giantlight.

The CueCore2 by Visual Productions is a compact form-factor lighting controller for permanent installations and architectural lighting. Designed for non-stop operation, the CueCore2 has no moving parts; the unit is completely solid-state and achieves a remarkable level of reliability that allows lighting engineers to ‘fit and forget. Although it is bundled with various supporting software tools, once programmed, the CueCore2 can operate completely stand-alone. It will playback lighting shows, static scenes and dynamic effects through its two DMX-512 universes. The unit can be programmed to respond to a variety of incoming protocols or scheduled to time or day. The Kiosc, in turn, is an application for creating custom touch screen user-interfaces for the Visual Productions’ range of lighting controllers. Kiosc is designed to have no editing capability, making it a fool-proof interface that can safely be presented to non-technical operators.

DWR Distribution’s Johnny Scholtz and Jannie de Jager assisted with the installation, helping with the DMX and programming. “It was fairly simple,” said Jannie. “We programmed quite a few scenes for events like Christmas, New Years, Breast Cancer Awareness and the building was even lit in red for the #LightSAred campaign. The system runs off the Kiosc Touch Screen, which is user friendly, easily giving the client access to select a colour or scene. The Leonardo also has a venue on the upper level, open for hire to the general public, and here the colours can be manipulated to coincide with a corporate theme or to create a certain ambience.”

Copyright © DWR Distribution

The Legacy Group have created an ideal location, providing elegance in the city from conferencing and entertainment to residential accommodation. “The team at Legacy are lovely to work with, understanding and reasonable. They take pride in their work and know what they are doing,” said Wolfgang. “The Leonardo is now one of the most striking features of the Johannesburg skyline, and it’s wonderful to say that we lit it up.”

Copyright © DWR Distribution