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BMFLs for Ghent Floralien

Products Involved

BMFL™ Spot LEDWash 600™

It's not every day that the opportunity presents itself to light something completely different, so when Belgian LD Thomas Boets was asked to light four sites across the city of Ghent for their 2016 Floralien (Flower Show), a quadrennial 10 day exhibition and extravaganza of floral and plant artistry and life organised by The Ghent Royal Society of Agriculture and Botany ... he jumped at the opportunity!

He also chose Robe BMFL Spots and LEDWash 600s among other lights to assist the process at two of the main sites - Sint-Pietersplein 'past and future' and Citadelpark 'a party for all the senses'.

The Floralien, funded by the Flemish government and the city of Ghent, has been running every four years since 1809, and this was the first time that Thomas - more used to lighting massive EDM events like 'I Love Techno' and a diversity of others from industrials to opera including architectural lighting installations - was asked to apply his skills in a completely different context.

The event - which facilitates a full programme of seminars, studies and educational opportunities running concurrently - is attended by VIPs, dignitaries, celebrities and flower aficionados from around the world. It is one of the highest profile and most prestigious events on the calendar in the world of flora, fauna, plant and flower art and displays and eco-sustainability.

DELIRIOUS WITH DESIRE

This was a giant chandelier created by leading Belgian florist, Tomas De Bruyne working with Hitomi Gilliam & Natalia Zhizko, which was on display in the fabulous Baroque St Peter's Church in central Ghent. The stunningly beautiful and majestic won the 2016 Floralties 'Public Choice' award.

'Delirious with Desire' was the centrepiece of the whole expo and was installed beneath the main dome of the church just inside the main entrance.

The enormous piece was rigged on a 6 metre diameter circular truss, weighed 3.5 tonnes and also included several strings of crystals and some big clear e27 bulbs in its midst to add a playful sparkle. It was suspended at a height of 17 metres from three trusses that had to be chemically fixed into the roof 30 metres above. The main floral chandelier was flanked by four 8 metre high floral 'tapestries' each hung 3 metres off the floor.

The first major challenge was rigging all this in the church, which took some serious planning and negotiating, and when that was completed, the next one was lighting the five pieces.

Thomas discussed the lighting in depth with Tomas de Bruyne and was acutely aware of the delicacy needed for the task which required fixtures that were powerful enough to throw lumens out into a dark space, subtle enough to enhance the beauty of the flowers and also that produced a specific quality of light. "It was important for both the art and the surroundings to have a rich, luscious textured lighting," he explained.

Tomas de Bruyne had also requested lighting equipment that produced less heat - to preserve the best atmospheric conditions for the flowers.

The four BMFL Spots were positioned on four 4 metre high towers on the floor directly below, shooting up at the sculpture from four corner positions and through it into the roof. He used some gobo projections and gentle animations in the six different lighting looks.

The 12 LEDWash 600s were around the base of the church's structural pillars on the floor also pointing upwards, skimming all five floral pieces.

The combination of these two fixtures created contrasting and complimentary shadows and added a layer of drama and interest for visitors.

The different coloured and textured looks were composed and then programmed onto a grandMA onPC based console which cycled through with a series of graceful fades. The controller also auto-started and stopped at the beginning and end of the 10 days duration of the expo.

The technical supplier for this was L&L Stage Services.

CITADELPARK (THE ORIGINAL GHENT EXPO SITE)

In this area Thomas's brief was to create three distinctive atmospheres with the lighting related to remembering the First World War which decimated the region of Flanders over 100 years ago.

He also used 24 x LEDWash 600s on the first section of a large display in the Pedro de Ganje Expo building that recreated a WW1 battlefield complete with dark foreboding atmosphere. LEDWashes provided a nice dark blue glow that contrasted with break up gobos in profiles focussed over all the trees and the wall area around it, which was also lit to add depth.

A water haze created using magic mist machines added additional mystery to the whole immersive experience where people could close their eyes and be transported to another world.

Guests then walked through to a 'reconstruction' section after the War, still dark but brighter with hope and then finally to 'The Future', an area replete with brightness, colour and positivity.

Thomas worked with landscape designers Olivier Descamps and Christian Vermander from Buro voor Vrije Ruimte on this area and Charlotte Debusschere / Rik Jacques from Piece Montée.

The special soundtrack was composed by Philip Ryckman from obscurewavemusic, contractor André G built it and the technical supplier was again L&L stage services.

Thomas used Robe CityFlex 48s to light the wall behind a large flower sculpture also in the expo centre by Laura Dowling, florist for the White House, and the other two areas he lit were the Floralien Hall in the old Ghent expo centre and Plateau 6 which was an outdoor space.

Thomas was asked to design lighting for the Floralien by local event company Fast Forward, with whom he's worked on many - mainly corporate - projects for about 10 years. He started work on it a year in advance, and really enjoyed using his experience and imagination in a completely new and different

environment ... although ironically originally went to university to study garden architecture – before he became fascinated by lighting!

“Design is sometimes about letting go ... the details are not merely ‘details’ ... they actually make the design,” he concluded.

The 2016 Ghent Floralien was another major success and a big hit with the public attracting nearly 150,000 visitors to the attractive port city and cultural hub.

VIP visitors and dignitaries included Belgian monarchs King Filip and his wife Queen Mathilde, Minister-President of Flanders Geert Bourgeois, Minister of Agriculture Mieke Schauvliege and Catalanian President Carles Puigdemont, and many more.

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland, Thomas Boets







