

Light Walk Rome

Light Walk Rome was a UK members only trip organised in conjunction with Iguzzini. Their generous sponsorship was a unique opportunity to create both a social and educational experience for the participants. The visit offered us a chance to walk, talk and experience light first hand in the urban public environment, to locally observe light with a mixed group of designers ranging from Professional to student. The walk created a platform for discussing what we had seen and allowed us to form a series of informal conclusions about the lighting of the city.

The Light Walk was broken up into various components incorporating talks, sightseeing and the chance to question designers working in Rome. Our first visit was at night to the Il Vittoriana monument built to commemorate the unification of Italy. We were accompanied by Alessandro Grassia, the lighting designer for the scheme. Everyone commented on the floodlit approach being so different to the UK practice of highlighting architectural details.

After a guided tour around the Exhibition Mito Della Velocita at the Pallazzo delle Esposizone, a lecture was arranged with the lighting designer of the Pallazzo itself and also with designer Ricardo Terzi. Ricardo talked about his development of a master plan for Rome which involved dividing the city into districts based on their historical and cultural significance. He showed images of his proposals to illuminate the Roman Forum and the Coliseum, with different architectural elements chronologically lit up as part of an 18 minute performance in the style of a 'son et lumiere'.

We then visited the Villa Borghese, once home to one of Rome's richest families and their art collection accompanied by the designer of the installation. The highlights of the collection for us were the four sculptures by Bellini and some Carravagio paintings. Our guide explained how Bellini had worked with light, detailing the technique he used to polish and then wax marble surfaces to create different skin textures.

Our night time Light Walk included all the famous highlights of Rome: the Coliseum, the Forum, Rome's main station, the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the Trevi fountain, the Pantheon and Piazza Navone. We finished with a trip to one of the seven hills of Rome for an overview of the lighting to the city and an excellent view of the lighting to the dome of St Peters.

Not only did the trip engage us and enable us to be critical of the lighting we had seen, it also provided a chance for designers to take the time and space to think about lighting in general. The conversations were charged and passionate and the ideas for developing PLDA as an Association were many. One designer was heard to say on arrival back in the UK that he felt: "For the first time in ages, truly inspired".

Many thanks to our hosts and sponsors: Iguzzini