

Urban lighting



Leake Street, below the tracks of London's Waterloo Station, is synonymous with the street artist Banksy. Indeed, it is also known as the 'Graffiti Tunnel' or the 'Banksy Tunnel', for the fact its famous graffiti walls were originally created by Banksy during his 2008 'Cans Festival' of street art.

The 300m-long road tunnel connects Lower Marsh to the hustle and bustle of London's South Bank and, as one of the few legal walls in the UK where artists can express their creativity in public, has long been a haven for graffiti artists from around the world to leave their mark.

As part of the wider regeneration of the Leake Street Arches into a 25,000sq ft space for cafés, bars and restaurants, the tunnel has now been given a lighting makeover by lighting design consultancy Nulty.

Working closely with developer LCR, the official switching on of the new lighting scheme took place in September.

One of the attractions of the project was the fact that, as the Nulty office is based just outside Waterloo Station, it is an area of London all the team are deeply familiar

with, explains director Ellie Coombs. 'It's not often you get a project right on your doorstep. It was fantastic to have the opportunity to collaborate with our local community and be part of the development of an urban space that our team know, love and use on a daily basis,' she says.

The concept was to bring the tunnel to life through the innovative use of light, using light as, essentially, a canvas for the artwork to be displayed clearly, as well as creating visual stimulation for both artists and visitors.

The space had to be flexible for future events, the light fittings had to be robust and the scheme had to showcase the unique and ever-changing artwork on the tunnel's walls.

WEAR, TEAR – AND SPRAY PAINT

The design within the tunnel features a theatrical truss suspended down the underpass. Mounted on this are then a series of Meyer spotlights that provide gallery-quality lighting to pick up on the colourful artwork.

During the design process, Nulty

worked closely with Secure by Design to ensure fixtures could withstand wear and tear while still being practical, such as being able to withstand a dose of spray paint.

For example, the bespoke spotlights were designed to have an anti-glare cowl for a more theatrical appearance, along with a secondary glass lens that can be easily removed and cleaned without interfering with the light in the space, should fittings be spray-painted over.

Linear RGBW uplights from Kemps Architectural Lighting were mounted on top of the truss to illuminate the arched ceiling, with a wash of white light to highlight the architecture of the space. The uplights' colour-changing capabilities can be tailored to create various moods for different events within the tunnel.

Accent lighting, from Linea Light Group, is then provided by light fixtures that have been carefully mounted at the base of the arches, above the nearby retail units, to celebrate the curved architecture of the space. The external wall lights have come from BEGA and the control system from Pharos. ■

Leake Street: the tunnel features a theatrical truss suspended down the underpass, mounted with a series of spotlights that provide gallery-quality lighting to pick up on the colourful artwork



STREET HEART

The Leake Street Arches' 'Graffiti Tunnel' below London's Waterloo Station is one of the few areas in the UK where graffiti artists are legally allowed to work. Famed for its works by Banksy, this vibrant street art hub has now been given a lighting makeover

By Nic Paton